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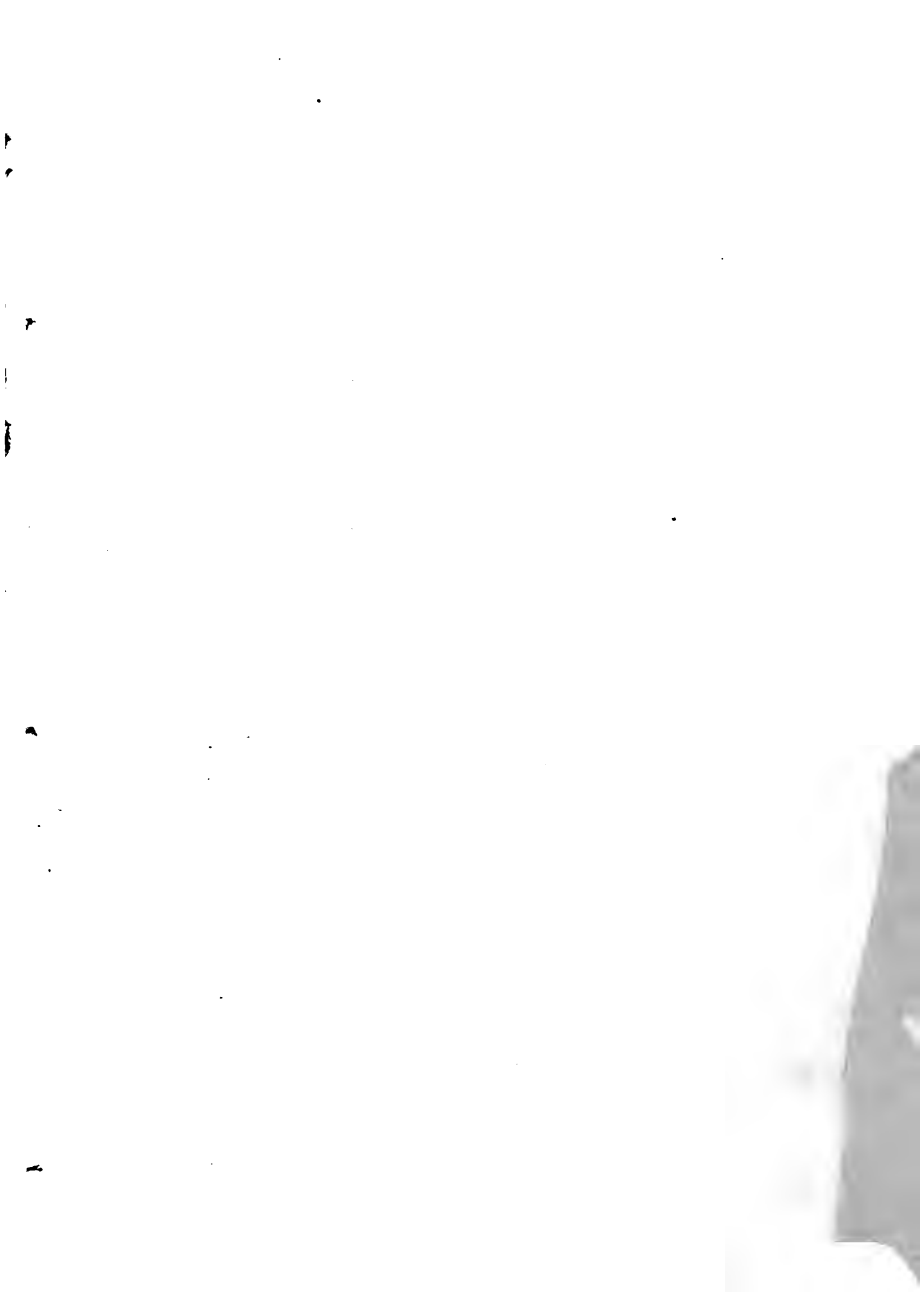
THE
P E A S A N T
AND
H I S L A N D L O R D.

BY THE BARONESS KNORRING.

TRANSLATED BY MARY HOWITT.

Complete in Two Parts.

NEW YORK:
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,
82 CLIFF STREET.
1848.







Imperfect: lack of all after p. 192.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

It is with great pleasure that I introduce to the English public another new Northern Author, well worthy to take her place beside Fredrika Bremer and Hans Christian Andersen. In her own country the Baroness Knorring stands side by side with the Author of "The Home" and "The Neighbors;" and I feel sure that the peculiar excellence and originality of her writings will be equally acknowledged in this, when once they are made known to our reading public.

Of the particular story which I have selected as the commencement of this series of translations, I must be allowed to say, that, treating as it does thus livingly and powerfully of the life of the people in a country which is in many respects kindred to our own, it affords a striking lesson, and a deep moral which must be obvious to all. It

affords one more of the many demonstrations which we every day meet with, of the highest and purest natures being driven from their proper course, and oppressed, and perverted by the worst. It affords also a grand lesson on the subject of Temperance; and proves, that though one false step often leads to ruin, which is retrievable only by death, yet that uprightness and virtue, through suffering and through death, work out their own salvation.

M. H.

THE ELMS, CLAPTON,

Feb. 1st, 1848.

AUTHORESS'S DEDICATION.

THIS sketch of a peasant and his connections is inscribed respectfully, affectionately, and gratefully to three female friends, to whom I owe all those feelings, and have done so from my latest childhood and earliest youth; namely, to the nobly born lady, the Countess C. M. Sommerhjelm (born Lewenhaupt), who has always gone as a guiding star before me; who held out her hand to me many a time when my step faltered; who, on manifold occasions, cheered and gladdened me, in part by her beloved presence, in part by her animated letters; and lastly, who, by obtaining for me the acquaintance of an inestimable friend,* has acquired an eternal claim to my gratitude. To dedicate now to her, who reckoned among her friends the kings and queens of our former dynasty, this "peasant story," seems indeed to be unlikely enough; but if there be any truth and nature found in my narrative, then there is no one who can better see and distinguish these than precisely this—friend of kings.

These unpretending pages are also dedicated to the well-born lady of Colonel Silfverstolpe (born Montgomery), who, in the young mind of the girl of thirteen, kindled the first sparks of other thoughts than those of the child—than of the giddy, dancing, playful girl; to her, who through her

* Fredrika Bremer.

whole life has known how to support and strengthen that admiration and devotion which were so justly her due ; to her, whose judgment on the productions of mind or of the pen all ought to wish for who have the courage to hear how the highest degree of justice—the finest and the most cultivated taste, expresses itself.

And, lastly, these sketches are inscribed also to thee, thou old, dear friend, who didst originally come from the peasant's cottage, thou faithful and devoted Svenborg,* who didst guide with thy hand the very first tottering footsteps of my childhood, and who, with a gentle and courteous hand, didst lead me out of my gay and sportive story-world up to God and His angels ; and who didst understand how, many a time, to restrain and to keep within bounds the restless, sportive, over-hill-and-dale-flying fancy of the child. To thee, also, are these pictures inscribed—to thee, who, perhaps, best of all canst form a correct judgment of them, partly through that clear glance which Mother Nature gave to thee, and partly because thou didst not alone come from, but also in the beautiful evening of thy life didst again enter under, the sod roof of the cottage, rich in years, experience, and knowledge of life, and, God be thanked ! not poor in any thing which can contribute to the happiness of life and the comfort of death.

To you—all three—highly beloved and venerated friends, is inscribed this sketch, with all submission, by

THE AUTHORESS.

* Mrs. Svenborg Dalin (born Böcker), an old and excellent servant, and children's friend, who for about fifty years lived in the family of the author's father and mother. (Author's note.)

P R E F A C E.

BULWER expresses somewhere his dissatisfaction with any book which comes before the public without preface or address; and he is perhaps right. A book without these forerunners is like a person who is introduced into a great company with the simple and single title of Mr. This or That.

It is true that there are *some persons* gifted with so fine a power of discrimination, that they can immediately see at the first glance whether a man belong to the educated, the much-educated, the accomplished, the pseudo-accomplished, the mis-educated, the over-educated, or the entirely uneducated. And there are also *those* who never require any preface, but who can determine by the first page of a book what the whole of it is; but as these will always constitute the minority, and many others remain who require both titles to persons and prefaces to books, that they may know, as it were, on what ground they stand, we will furnish our little book with such a little preface, as shall tell about *whom* and *why* it is come forth, and so on.

The authoress, born and brought up in the country, and also compelled by her domestic circumstances, as well in

the home of her ancestors as in her own, to be at all times surrounded by a great number of servants, and have numerous dependants, and often to come into contact with the country people—has had from her very youth, opportunities of becoming acquainted with this class. From the earliest years of her life she has mixed herself up with their mode of thinking, talking, and acting; has become acquainted with their manners and customs, their friends and enemies, their faults and their virtues, their many beautiful and many unpleasing aspects; and lastly, with their sufferings, their vices, and, to speak shortly, the causes of these.

The authoress has, in later years, by the aid of the acquaintance she particularly possessed of the country people, at least in her own province, studied this natural class of human beings, and seen how many beautiful and glorious revelations are made to those who have eyes to see them; how much noble seed shoots up in silence, and bears at length divine fruit, while much also of the same kind perishes from want of looking after and nurture, or because it is cast into an altogether unprofitable soil. She has seen Roman virtues, sacrifices, and renunciations, so much the greater because it was never expected that they should be observed, admired, or even known. She has seen great genius and unmistakable capabilities, which lay so buried by ignorance, poverty, and the caring for daily wants, and thereby so hedged in on all sides, that they never were able to press, with their light wings, through those heavy, hard coverings. She has seen among this class unselfishness, love, friendship, childlike submission, parental devotion, to that sublime degree which may, perhaps, be sought for in vain any where excepting in romances or plays, and

scarcely even there; for if a work of genius is to become popular, and to obtain sympathy, it must do homage to the virtues of the age, and wealth and selfishness are indeed the two most highly exalted on the Olympus of our times. She (the authoress) has met with, also, among these rude, uneducated men, much natural smartness, much real, pure humor, heard many caustic jests, and light, merry pleasant-ries, although adapted to their roughly-hewn and unpolished ideas, which, nevertheless, are ideas, large and profound enough sometimes. She has seen in those low, crowded cottages, so much pleasantness, happiness, and comfort; so much enjoyment, so much good will and good temper in poverty, as entirely to compensate for wealth. She has, in a word, seen so much good and so little evil among these children of Nature, that she has many a time thanked God for having placed her among them, and that her nearest connections, on which she, like all other women, always depended, loved and highly respected them; and that they, by reason of their justice, their benevolence, and popularity, caused themselves to be beloved in return by these amiable children of Nature, whose love and devotion, whose hatred and whose aversions, are always, at least, of the true kind, and are not the offspring of any representation or self-interest.

It is true that she has seen among the lower classes of the country people crimes and coarse vices, but these former were nearly always unpremeditated, and the latter for the most part occasioned by circumstances which might easily have been altered, as being those which come from *without*, and not from *within*. Imperfect education, want of instruction in Christianity and morality, frequent intercourse with vagabonds and rude criminals, and the wretch-

ed example set by the higher classes: these are, in her opinion, most frequently the origin of those vices and crimes, if people would only give themselves the trouble to search into them. Brandy, also, has often been the underdemon which has assisted in perfecting that which the other causes had begun, giving, as it were, wind to the sails of that evil which leads directly to perdition and misery; for brandy is, like so many other things, not an evil in itself, but a means in the hand of evil.

With the knowledge we thus have acquired respecting the country people and their way of life, it has often annoyed us to see representations of them in which merely want and poverty are placed by the side of wealth and superfluity; rudeness and ignorance by accomplishments and knowledge; just as if this class had nothing else which appealed to the heart but this misery and subjection, which always stand forth in far brighter colors than they have in reality, when they are set in contrast with our luxury and refinement; as if pity and kindness were the only good feelings which these beings should awaken within us! If it were so, how low is the condition of this so-called lowest class, and how small and miserable are, then, the means of awakening our interest! because who may not perish of hunger and nakedness? For such representations there requires, of a truth, no merits, no natural endowments; and *art* ought to discard, by this rule, the use of any means of giving life to its picture, except those of contrast, and thus elevating the lower classes at the expense of the higher. It is an unworthy fashion in art to work in light and shade, merely for the sake of effect.

This is, however, done very often; for most frequently when we (the so-called educated) would talk about or de-

scribe the lower people, we begin with their poverty, their rude manners, their uncultivated speech, their astonishment at every thing which our refinement has made articles of every-day use to us ; their vices, which so often lie open to the day : and we remember all these immediately, because they are the first things which strike our eyes, as well as those in which they differ most from ourselves. But if we observe them more nearly and more carefully, we shall find that these traits are merely accidental, and certainly do not constitute that which properly distinguishes and characterizes them ; but that they think, feel, act, rejoice, suffer, exactly as we do, although under equally different forms ; and if they were to give an account of their thoughts and feelings, it would be in words as different as every thing else appears to be different between us and them.

We have now made a little attempt to paint them as we have seen them entirely independent of us ; as we believe them to be among one another, and without being placed in comparison with any other than themselves. We have endeavored to place ourselves in these people's position, and to express their genuine feelings, which are fine without being refined, and pure without having been purified ; we have endeavored to place ourselves in a human mind which thinks and acts entirely upon its own account, without all the help, and also without all the bewilderment, which education, reading, worldly wisdom, and æperience give ; we have endeavored to feel with their feelings, speak with their tongue, see with their eyes, to conceive and afterward to represent, what they had conceived, just as they themselves would do.

We have *attempted* all this, but whether we have suc-

ceeded or not, we do not know, and, worst of all, our gentlemen critics are least likely to know, because they are very much less in connection with the country people than ourselves are, and might, we fear, be very little capable of judging whether we had failed, or whether we had succeeded in representing these unpolished diamonds, or granite blocks, as they really are, in their primitive circumstances. On the contrary, we appeal to you who are in moderate circumstances, but in habits of life, which are continually bringing you into connection with the people, who live whole years through in a remote country place, where *the town*, the nearest little town, has no influence on the peasantry, but is for them merely a place where they can buy "herrings and salt, spices, and purchasable wares," as well as where they can sell at the fair "the cow which is too old, or the bullock which can not be fed;" and which is not a Sodom under the shape of an Eldorado, toward which all are yearning, a flaming *ignis fatuus*, which the poor country people can not see without being attracted to, and where like the moths with the candle, they burn first their wings and then themselves; which often is the case in great cities and their environs; we turn to you, ye *working* clergymen, of whom we have endeavored to give a faint outline—ye divines in country places, who *actually* are shepherds of your flocks, who love them, watch them, tend them yourselves, and not by hirelings, and who do not respect them merely for their fleeces. These are the persons to whom we turn; and we ask you whether this Gunnar, in whom we have attempted to describe all that knight-like quality (we must be pardoned for the use of a word which is dear to us of old, and which *alone* expresses what we mean), all that independent and

manly determination, all that passionate, yielding, and pliable character, which nature has often placed in the same human breast, and which may be developed either into great virtues or great faults; and at the same time without education, obtained either in the bustling life of the world, or beneath the roof of a cottage: to you we turn, and ask whether *he* is merely a fancy picture, or whether you have not likewise seen, as we have done, a fac-simile of him, not, indeed, frequently and every where, but yet far less unfrequently than the gentry of towns, who make steamboat-excursions to become acquainted with the country and country people, might imagine. We say precisely the same about Elin and Mother Ingrid. And as to what concerns the rest, we see every day and every hour their prototypes.

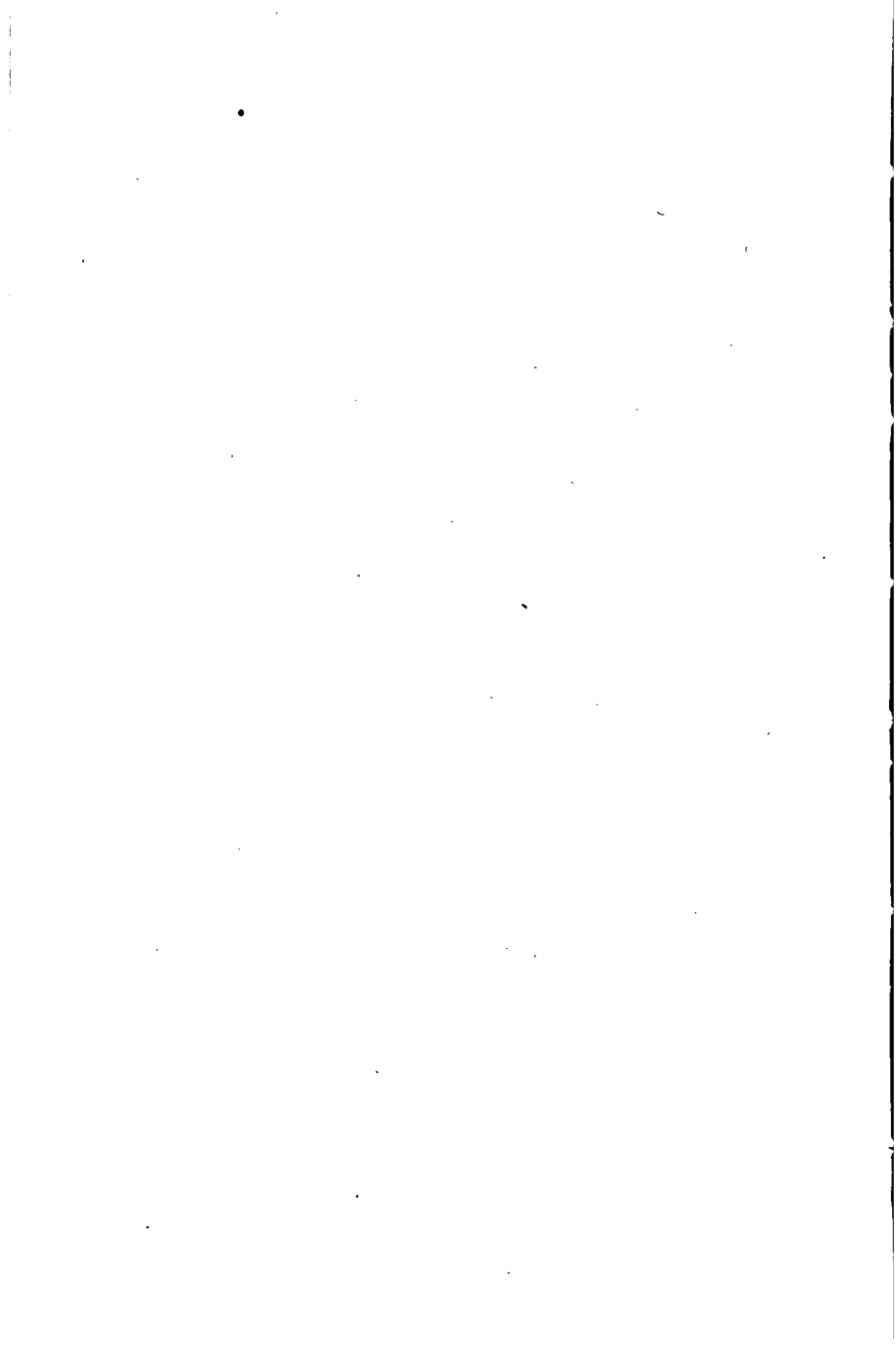
That some of them are wicked, coarse, and rude, and must be thus represented, both with regard to their actions and their speech, as well as to form a contrast with those who through nature, and a religious education are good, profound in thought, and of an elevated and expansive turn of mind, remains as a matter of course, and can, of a truth, be only blamed by those who are in the habit of straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel, but not by any friend of art. And let us here take the liberty of offering an apology for some of Olle's expressions, as well as others of the like kind, at which over-nice and prudish dames may consider it proper to purse up their mouths. They may also cast down their eyes, blush, and assume all manner of bashfulness, at the very beginning of our peasant-story, (N.B. in case any of them venture to take up the book with the very tips of their fingers); but if their delicate nerves should be too much shattered by this beginning, then they

may just throw aside our book, and take one of Eugene Sue's, Balzac's, Frederic Soulie's, or any of our usual novels and periodicals, in which fine, unrestrained life in the darkest passages of the great cities is painted *con amore*, and the vices, at all events, wear the beautiful and convenient masks which we deny to them. They can take these, in order somewhat to calm themselves, after reading in print of a little casualty—very vexatious, as God knows, but which, nevertheless, is of daily occurrence even in their own houses (if they have any), or in those of their neighbors, if they have only their eyes and their ears open.

In conclusion, a word may be said upon the language. Many people have imagined that they could represent the peasantry and the common people merely by imitating their peasant-speech, which varies in every province, and which is always more or less murdered Swedish; but in so doing there is neither art in the author nor interest for the reader, because words are never any thing else but words, and the *dissimilar ideas* constitute, indeed, properly the difference between these uneducated people and ourselves. We have therefore endeavored to give these ideas as we required them, and that as little as possible in their own self-made language, which, however has not any thing particularly characteristic in it but its perpetual contractions, which we also have occasionally profited by, that, at all times, it may be borne in mind what sort of people are talking. We will also make a remark for the benefit of our city readers, namely, that the lower classes, as well as the higher, have a holiday language as well as one for every-day use; and also that the holiday language among the peasantry is almost always that employed in the trans-

lation of the Bible and the accompanying hymn-book, which constitute their entire reading, and that this bears the stamp of every body's highest degree of cultivation.

With this we here close our preface, in the hope that it may be read through, and deliberated upon, and also that it may incline every reader to a mild and charitable judgment upon that which we have attempted.



THE PEASANT AND HIS LANDLORD.

CHAPTER I.

"Qu'un moment de vivacité
Peut causer de calamité!"—*Vieux Chanson.*

ALL the men-servants belonging to the rich Mr. P., proprietor of the large and beautiful estate of Grantorp, in Westgothland, had not spent the whole of the short December day in the great business of threshing and corn-measuring. Some of them had stayed in the house, and chopped and carried in the Christmas firewood; and Gunnar, the youngest of them, had helped the maid-servants to mangle the linen of the great Christmas wash. But now the day was ended, the mangling done; and after Gunnar, who was silent and full of thought, had helped the laughing and gossiping girls to carry in the baskets of clothes, he went, in the same state of mind, down into the men-servants' room, which was empty, cold, and desolate, because none of the other laborers had returned from their day's work.

Gunnar seated himself upon a chest, gazed into the moonlight, and heaved a deep sigh, which, however, did not come freely forth, but the heaviest part of which remained in the heavily-laden youthful breast. But now he heard the cheerful voice of his fellow-servant Bengt. Bengt was about the age of Gunnar, and came in singing a merry song, with a great bundle of fagots and branches in his arms. On his entrance into the room, which took place with a great deal of activity, bustle, and noise, he threw his bundle of wood carelessly down before the hearth, slapped his body several times with his arms, as is the custom with country people when they are cold, and then, singing very loudly all the time the fragment of a song, he

began to arrange the sticks in the fireplace for kindling; nor was it till he had gone to the shelf above the window to search for the tinder-box, that he saw, in the dim light, Gunnar, who was sitting silently and immovably on the chest.

"Who have we here?" exclaimed Bengt instantly; but when he went forward and found that it was Gunnar, he said to him, laughingly, "What the deuce! Is it you, you sluggard, who are sitting at your ease and resting yourself, instead of cutting wood and making a fire?*" What are you musing about? But I know what it is: you have been working all day with the young girls, and so now you are as fine-fingered as they are. But look now, we have had something to do—that have we. The squire has been out with us *himself*; he was with us at the threshing all the blessed day long, and, though we worked like slaves, he kept saying, 'Now, lads, get on, else we shall not have done before Christmas!' To be sure we had a good quantity of liquor in the afternoon; but what better were we for that?—one knew nothing about it an hour afterward. But what is the use of talking about drink to you? I fancy you have had plenty, you!—and have had breakfast, and luncheon, and coffee, and apples, and God knows what more, among the girls! And what deuced trumpery sort of work is this mangle to ours! I know you well, you rascals; mangle and go on as long as the least glimpse remains of the old ma'msell, but in the mean time you may romp with the girls. Ay, ay, thou tall fellow," continued Bengt, laughing, while he blew up the fire, and swore at the squire and the damp fuel which they were obliged to use, and bragged a little at having stolen some dry wood among it; "ay, ay, don't you think but that I saw you set yourself forward this morning, when Overseer Anders said that *one* of us must go and mangle with the girls; don't you think but that I heard you say, 'Yes, I can go and do that.'"

"Nay, that is a cursed lie!" said Gunnar, who now first opened his mouth, and who moved for the first time. "I said not one word, but stood stock still, till he said, 'Where is Gunnar? Thou shalt go and mangle to-day.'"

* For the information of the reader, it may be mentioned that it was an agreement among the farm-servants of Grantorp, that he who first returned home from work on winter evenings should, when he saw that it was dark in the servants' room, take in with him a bundle of fagots and make a fire.

"What!" interrupted Bengt; "can you deny that Overseer Anders said, 'It is a good thing that the girls will have their good-tempered Gunnar with them, or else they would ride over me—even would tear out my eyes, or snap off my nose!' Can you deny that he said that?"

"Nay, that I neither can nor will deny," replied Gunnar; "but that *I* never said a word, I will stand to the death for!"

"Ay, on my word, that may very well be," returned Bengt; "but, by all the cats, all went, and you nevertheless stayed; and this I can answer for, not a word did you say against it; that I remember, whether you remember it or not."

"Ha! it is all one to me, whatever it was," replied Gunnar; and there was something so melancholy and dejected in his tone, that Bengt started up from the fire, where otherwise he was warming himself with great satisfaction, and approached Gunnar, throwing at the same time upon him the light of a blazing brand, which he took from the hearth.

"What is amiss with you, Gunnar?" asked he, in a sympathizing voice; "are you out of spirits, or are you ill?—but as to tired, that I never saw you!"

"I am out of spirits," said Gunnar, and pushed his fingers through his dark-brown hair.

"Oh, there is nothing worth being out of spirits about," replied Bengt, encouragingly; but just then the door opened, and all the other and older laboring-men thronged in with Overseer Anders at their head. They came in covered with snow, cold, and half frozen; and before long the conversation was carried on in a loud voice, partly about the day's work, partly about the squire, who had been through the day "a regular Turk;" partly about "the cold," partly about "Christmas," which was just at hand, and the games which they had last Christmas, and those they expected to have this, and how especially stupidly it fell out this year that there should be no Christmas moonlight, which ended on the thirteenth.

During this time Bengt continued to question Gunnar in a low whisper, but Gunnar made no reply.

"Come, Gunnar," said Bengt at length, seeing him unwilling to talk in the room; "shall we two go out and get something more to lay on the fire?" and mechanically Gunnar accompanied him.

When they were come out beneath the fine and lofty expanse

of God's blue heaven, from which the moon and stars in thousands looked down upon them, the long pent-up tears streamed from the eyes of the youthful Gunnar, and he said, while they went softly toward the great gloomy avenues, the trees of which were hung with hoar-frost :

"Yes, there is, do you know, Bengt, an end of all happiness for me! I would just as willingly go and drown myself now as live. There is for me no more merriment and laughter with you, Bengt, as I have had hitherto, ever since we were little lads together."

"Yes, that say I," replied Bengt, who was more occupied by the last part of Gunnar's sentence than by the first—"this I say of a truth, that never, no never would I have taken earnest-money from the squire, if it had not been for living in the same place with you; and if you leave, then I will leave also: that is as clear as daylight, and as true as God the Father. That is sure and certain—but what have you got now to fret yourself about? Have you had a quarrel with the old ma'msell? Fie! for shame! that is not a thing to vex one's self about! The old woman does get angry sometimes, but for all that she is a very good sort of body. But as to any quarrels with women-folk, they are not things to put one out of the way. That is not it, though; have you been falling out with any of the lasses? Tist! now I know what it is! now it comes into my head! Lena, who is always running after you, both by night and day, has been cross with you, and has quarreled with you; and though you swore and mocked when she wanted to kiss you, yet now you are crying because she is angry."

"And then I should be crying for nothing at all!" said Gunnar, wiping away his tears. "No, believe me, it is a deal worse than that! God grant that she were angry with me, then it would be a deal better."

"Nay, what is it, then?" asked Bengt, whose curiosity increased every minute.

After several other questions from Bengt, to which he gave evasive answers, Gunnar said—

"Ah, yes! I may as well tell you how it is. We have now been good friends ever since we were little lads, and therefore I shall now tell you the honest truth, and show you how badly it falls out for me. Yes, look you. You yourself know that the cursed Lena (God forgive my sin for saying so!) run after me the whole year, as if she were mad, and I scarcely ever—

may, never would have any thing to say to her. Last autumn, however, in statutes week,* when we all went out a pleasuring, she was worse than ever, for she never once left me; and Heaven knows how it was! but on Sunday evening, when we went to Aspas, there was a desperate deal of drinking, and both you and I, who otherwise never drink, and because of it have both of us such good characters, got drunk as pipers. I do not know how I could ever have made such a fool of myself; but certain it is, that, since this time, I have got to dislike that cursed Lena (God forgive me for saying so!) more than ever. And now, look you, she comes weeping and wailing, and saying that I have made a miserable woman of her, and that it is all through me, and Heaven knows what; that she shall lose her good name, and that it is all my fault; and that I ought to marry her, and that the squire and Ma'msell Sara said that they would compel me to it; and many other such stupid things she said."

"Stuff and nonsense!" said Bengt, with disgust, "stuff and nonsense! that's not a thing to vex yourself about. There is not one among us but knows well enough how that limb of Satan has run after you, and any body with any sense can understand why. She is certainly full four or five-and-thirty years old, the vulgar wretch! and you are hardly three-and-twenty. Don't think about it. No, that will never come to pass: no, you must point-blank deny it, and let it take its own course."

"Yes, yes, but it's the truth for all that," said Gunnar, slowly and gloomily; "and it's not right to deny the truth, either before God or man."

"Why, yes, it may be the truth," said Bengt, who was not quite so conscientious as Gunnar, "but, you see, she can not bring forward any witnesses, and it will be altogether for the best that you deny it through thick and thin. Look you, if the child lives, then you can do something for it. Nothing in all this world should ever make me have Lena, if I were you. Good gracious! it would be standing like a dog to be fastened

* *Minnerveckan* (equivalent to our statutes) is the name given to the week following the 24th of October, when the servants who are changing their places are either at liberty or at leisure, and even those who still remain in their situations have more time allowed for themselves than common, when games, dances, and amusements are enjoyed by those in the country. (Author's note.)

up in a kennel! No, let come what would, *I* never would have Lena."

Thus talked the two young laborers till it was late in the evening; and when, at length, the others went into the kitchen for their supper, Gunnar said he did not want any, and remained behind in the servants' room.

"Yes, yes, you rascal!" said some of the other servants, "we understand it well enough; you have been having such splendid fare to-day with Lena and the rest of the girls, that you will not put up with 'stir-about.'"

Gunnar made no reply to this, nor did Bengt either, who yet at the same time went and ate his porridge, and took occasion to call Lena, who was standing by, a nightmare, an old corn-screen, and a good-for-nothing piece of goods; and on her part she found occasion to call Bengt a dog's whelp and a gal-lows-bird; and in conclusion wrought herself up to such a pitch of anger as to give him a heavy box on the ear, after which she sprung into the parlor, where she knew she was safe in her capacity of housemaid.

The remaining days of the week were employed in hard labor; and Gunnar went about with a dejected air and down-cast eyes the whole time. Bengt continually repeated his advice, that he should deny, and unceasingly deny, which was the very best means of getting out of this mess. When Sunday came, however, and the command was given to Gunnar that he must go up to the squire in his own room, as he "wished to speak with him," a cold shudder went through him, and it seemed as if a stab was sent to his heart.

With heavy and slow steps Gunnar betook himself to his master, for whom he had but little esteem; and as soon as the crafty squire saw how his color changed from white to red, and how in his agitation he thumbed his Sunday hat, he was perfectly aware that poor Gunnar anticipated what the questions were which would be put to him. And during all the reproaches which his master heaped upon him with gravity rather than in a spirit of reprimand, he never once looked up, nor replied by a single word; but when the squire wished him to confess, and sought also to obtain from him a promise to marry Lena, in which case he offered him a very good little farm, the tenant of which was about to leave the coming spring, Gunnar still remained silent, and could by no means be prevailed upon to confess. All the more steadfastly did he stand by his denial,

when the squire changed his mode of attack, and began in the first place to grumble and command, and then afterward to threaten and insult.

After nearly an hour's painful examination, Gunnar went his way, and the squire began to have some doubts whether he should be able "to bring Gunnar to;" and the first words which Bengt said to his friend on meeting him were these:

"Well, I know that you have denied through thick and thin?"

"Oh, yes!" replied Gunnar, with a mournful and spiritless voice; for however courageously he had stood up for himself before the squire, whom he disliked, his heart failed him when he again found himself alone with God and his own conscience.

He did not trouble himself about dinner on Sunday; and in order that he might escape Lena and all the others, he went out and laid himself down in the stable, where he was so happy as to fall asleep, spite of all his by no means trifling anxieties and pangs of conscience. From this sleep he was suddenly awoke in the afternoon by the disagreeable voice of Lena, who, however, merely announced to him that he must immediately go up to Ma'msell Sara, because "she wished to speak with him."

"Oh, Lord!" sighed he, and scratched himself behind the ear; "what sorrow and misfortune can come merely from that devilish brandy, with which, from this day forth, I will have nothing to do!"

It was with steps still slower and heavier than on the former occasion that Gunnar went up to the well-beloved and worthy old ma'msell, the squire's elder sister, who now, since the death of her sister-in-law, took care of her brother's house, household, and children, and that in such an excellent manner as only these old, devoted, unmarried sisters can do.

"Oh, my God! what a strait am I got into!" thought poor Gunnar, while he went up the stairs, and remained standing a long time at the door before he could summon resolution to open it. At length he compelled himself to put his hand on the latch, and then the moment afterward he stood before the dreaded mistress; for fear of a person proceeds just as often from love and esteem as from dread.

The old ma'msell, who otherwise was accustomed to look so kindly upon the young, brisk, willing, and helpful Gunnar,

whose beautiful, pure, and open countenance softened every glance, especially a woman's, now looked grave and solemn, like one of Fredrika Bremer's very worst minster churches. Gunnar now ventured still less to lift up his eyes than before her red-headed, crafty brother; and when the old ma'msell, in a few but solemn and impressive words represented to him, not only how he had broken the word of God, but human law, without attempting any longer a hardened denial, Gunnar burst into tears. And when, shortly afterward, the pastor walked into the room by a side-door—the pastor who was beloved and esteemed by all his flock, and from whom Gunnar, but a few years before, had learned his well-understood Christian duties, as well as had received from him the Lord's Supper for the first time—when he, with a soft and solemn step, entered the room, and added his voice to that of the beloved mistress, he no longer was able to withstand the imperative voice of conscience, but, forgetful of all Bengt's well-intentioned counsel, and his own half-indignant and half-pardonable excuses, immediately acknowledged his sin.

But now came another chapter. He was *willing* to acknowledge the child, and he would marry Lena, if it lay in his power, but . . . under no circumstances whatever would he marry her.

The clergyman and the old ma'msell represented to him, in vain, that when a person does wrong he must make reparation in the way which God commands, and not in that which suits his own pleasure, because in that way he can neither atone to God nor to the injured party. The worthy pastor spoke earnestly and persuasively, and the youth seemed to feel again that time returned when he had stood as a catechumen before the beloved teacher, when he had knelt at the communion-table, and had received from the hand of him who now spoke to him of his broken, holy vows, the grace of God in the form of bread and wine. Memory and affection overcame him; he was again a child, and he spoke that unhappy word of consent which bound gyves upon his limbs and laid a stone upon his heart, and which at a future time pressed tears of repentance from the eyes of the minister as well as from those of the old ma'msell.

"Yes, now it is done!" said he, in a voice of stupid desperation, when, on going down to the men-servant's room, he encountered Bengt.

The two young men went out together into the dim moonlight, and walked down the hoar-frost covered avenue. But how miserable was every thing now! They both walked on in silence. The one had no heart to tell any thing; the other had nothing more to advise.

"Yes! here we went on Sunday evening," said Gunnar, at length, "and I fancied myself unhappy *then*; but, look you, it was a *nothing* in comparison with what I *now* feel. I remember that I then looked up to heaven, and thought upon God the Father, wondering whether it could be His will that I should have her; and then I thought with myself that, if I could see the least black cloud on all the vault of heaven, then I should believe that it was His will. But I did not find a single one! But now see! Now there goes a great, black cloud right before the moon; and, look now! now I know that I should have been damned if I had not taken her; so said the minister, of a certainty."

"Asch!" said Bengt, who had within himself a great inclination for controverting this opinion, but who still had an equally great diffidence in directly declaring that to be "a lie" which the minister had said, because he himself had been one of his catechumens, and he had accustomed himself to regard the words of the teacher as coming from God the Father himself. The two young men walked on in silence; they neither of them had any of the sophisms of education and society with which to console themselves. What was said was said; what was done was done; and Gunnar believed himself to have lost, with his freedom, not a *part* of his happiness, but *all*. Bengt, otherwise so loquacious, did not even make any inquiries about the circumstances of Gunnar's conversation with the pastor and the gentlefolks, and seemed to wish to know no more than that the banns were to be published on Christmas-eve, which was on Sunday, and that Gunnar, at spring, should become the tenant of Vika, a large, and both good and beautiful farm, which lay upon a great inland lake.

"Well, at all events, you will have a tremendously grand wedding, if you must marry the nightmare," said Bengt, after a long silence, but in his customary gay and cheerful voice; for the thoughts of the wedding had, for the moment, put out of his head the thoughts of his friend's sorrow.

"Oh, yes," replied Gunnar, with indifference, and yet with a sigh; "but it's time enough to think of that."

"When will it be?" inquired Bengt.

"Oh, on Twelfth-day, or thereabout!" answered Gunnar, with embarrassment.

"Ho, ho!" said Bengt, consolingly; "perhaps, in the long run, it will not turn out so badly, however ill the beginning may seem; and, after all, Lena is a clever, high-spirited woman, who will make a good housekeeper, and sufficiently——"

"Ah, spare me the hearing of it!" interrupted Gunnar. "You do not know, and nobody ever can know, how little I can bear her."

When Bengt found that none of his grounds of comfort were available, he determined to go home and to bed. Gunnar mechanically did the same, but he did not find his accustomed sound, youthful sleep upon his bed of straw that night.

CHAPTER II.

IN the mean time, the gentlefolks upstairs sat around the tea-table that same Sunday evening, and accidentally they came to speak of the afternoon's scene.

"I do not know how it was," said the minister, "but it has seldom happened that the fulfillment of my duty has been so difficult to me as it has been to-day. There was something in that poor youth's appearance which indicated an inward despair, which he in vain endeavored to control, but which, of a truth, made me wish that I might not one day repent the authority which I exercised over him and his future fate."

The squire kept stirring his tea, and never looked up.

"I say almost the same as the pastor," remarked Ma'msell Sara. "It went shockingly against me to act according to your desire, my dear brother, who are otherwise generally so tolerant in such cases, to persuade the poor lad to this marriage, which, after all, is not a suitable one."

"*My* desire! Bless me! How can you say so?" stammered the squire. "I never heard but that you wished to have as much to do in the management of the house as I, or a little more; and I see nothing so unsuitable in this marriage between peasants, especially when one helps to set them on

their legs after——after they both have served so many years here. He was so stubborn and so inflexible, the clown! toward me," continued the squire, as the others remained silent, "that——that if I had done right, then——"

But the sentence was not concluded.

"Oh, yes," replied the pastor, slowly; "I can not exactly say that it is the difference in the age—that does not furnish any sufficient reason why this marriage should be unsuitable, because one sees so often, among the peasantry, that the wife is older than the husband, and the married couple are quite happy for all that. I know not how it is, but this Gunnar, ever since he was a little lad, and especially since he read his lessons to me, has taken a great hold on my heart, and it has always been a pleasure to me to look into his pure, open, cheerful countenance, which reflected a soul and a heart equally open, pure, and good. Had the youth studied, he would have become a great light; for a brighter understanding and a clearer head I seldom have met with among those who are so entirely uneducated; and I always thought, when I saw him, that, were he not so happy in his ignorance, one might of a truth grieve that the sciences had not found their way into such a head as his. I saw him, however, now looking so wholly miserable, and a passing thought struck me, that if he had chosen such a path, he would at least have escaped *this* cup of sorrow; for I can not get the thought out of my heart how he can, merely out of a sense of duty, bring himself to unite his fate with that of Lena, whom I—God forgive me for it!—never rightly could endure since she, several years ago, removed into this church communion, although I must confess that I know nothing bad of her."

"Ah, then, the pastor thinks entirely as I do," observed Ma'msell Sara. "She is a clever person for her work—that I willingly concede; but she has for me something so repugnant in her appearance that I never can accustom myself to that sharp countenance, but always, as it were, feel as if I would avoid it."

"Ah, such fancies!" said the squire, rising up and walking impatiently up and down the room; "but it is so like you old maids. You never can endure handsome girls, even if they were the very best of their kind."

"Ah, my most worthy pastor," said Ma'msell Sara, smiling, "how can it ever come to pass that we poor old maids *always*

should be accused of harboring within us the foul fiend Jealousy toward other young and more attractive women ! Certainly it must be, because we ourselves excite so little jealousy, but much more a feeling of compassion, blended with a good deal of contempt."

"Yes, so it is," replied the pastor. "Human beings judge of these as blindly, crookedly, and unreasonably as they judge of all others, which principally arises from no one knowing any one besides himself, and that, for the most, badly enough, because if we knew ourselves perfectly we should certainly be much more gentle in our judgment of others."

"Ah, yes; all that may be just as it will, and as it may," said the squire, who never had any thoughts beyond those of his own affairs, and who now had his own particular reasons, which were only known to himself, for wishing to introduce some new subject of conversation; "all that may be as it will; but certain it is that old maids and handsome girls never do pull well together, and, therefore, pastor, you and I will have a game at backgammon."

Ma'msell Sara, who now saw perfectly well that she should not have a chance of any more intellectual conversation with the minister, replied laughingly, while she set out the chess-board, "Yes, yes, I should think I deserved many a hard imputation if I envied Lena her jet-black hair, her penciled eyebrows, her keen eyes, and fine complexion. No, believe me, if I should envy her any thing, it would much rather be the young Gunnar, because he has always been a great favorite of mine!"

"Yes, yes, that I can very well believe!" said the squire, jestingly, and struck a heavy blow on the backgammon-board, exclaiming, "Tre deuce!" and now nothing was spoken of between the two gentlemen but "aces and doublets," and "cinq deuce." Ma'msell Sara, therefore, went out into another room, in which the squire's children, two half-grown boys, and their tutor, sat and amused themselves. She took to them a basket of apples, and joked merrily with them, gayly and affectionately, as she always did.

Not a word was said in the family about what was going to happen. The squire was right glad to avoid both thinking and talking about Lena and Gunnar; Ma'msell Sara was somewhat unwilling to talk of it before the banns were published; the tutor and the little boys knew nothing about it; Lena had her

own notions, and wished on the Sunday to enjoy the people's astonishment; Gunnar kept silent and worked, saying all the time not a single word which he could avoid; and Bengt found, quite contrary to his custom, that it was better to be silent concerning some things about which he could have given information.

CHAPTER III.

On the evening before St. Thomas's day, Gunnar requested to have a part of the wages which were due to him, together with permission to go home to his old mother, and afterward to the town, to buy "the ring and the gifts."* To this he was rigorously urged by Lena, as well as by his own wishes; "for," thought he to himself, "as I have taken the Evil One into the boat, I will e'en bring him creditably to land, and then let it go as it may."

In the evening, when Gunnar had finished his work, he went with a heavy and deliberate step to the wood where his mother dwelled, in a little cottage, in which he himself had spent the greater part of his life. In his childhood, his father, who had been a well-to-do farmer, had left him and an elder brother, together with a widow, in great poverty, owing to his passion for drinking. From this cause it was that Gunnar had a great abhorrence of brandy, and often would pass through his mind the words which his mother had said to him when, as a boy, he left her to live with the rich squire of Grantorp.

"Yes, yes," she said to him, "had not thy father (God give his soul peace and mercy!) thought so much about the wicked brandy, then thou mightst have been spared going out to service, and mightst have stayed at home with thy mother, and taken care both of her and the place. Have a care, therefore, thyself of that wicked stuff!" And, now, how well had Gunnar followed that well-meant advice!

The way was long, and it was late in the night when Gunnar knocked at his mother's door.

* Presents which the bridegroom gives to the bride after the banns are published. (Author's note.)

"Merciful Heaven!" said the old woman, who did not at all expect her son on the evening of a week-day. "Who is it that comes with such great strides, and knocks at my door so late at night?"

"Oh, it is no thief," replied Gunnar; "it is nobody but I. Get up now for me, dearest mother."

"Bless me! it is thou, Gunnar!" exclaimed the mother, full of gladness. "Dost thou know that I was so frightened that every drop of blood stood still in my old veins? But what can it be that has brought thee here to-day? I did not look for thee before Christmas-day, as usual."

"Ah, yes, I shall come then, too," replied Gunnar, who well knew why the good old woman was a little anxious that he should come on Christmas-day as usual. And with that he threw himself, spite of the day's work, and the long walk through wood and morass, and, more than all, of his heavy thoughts, upon an old wooden sofa, upon which, in his boyish years, he had been accustomed to lie. There he remained silent for some moments with closed lips and eyes, considering, in a chaotic state of mind, how he should begin his confession to his mother. At length his mother went up to him with a burning brand in her hand, and threw the light of it upon his face.

"What in all the world is amiss with thee, lad?" said she; "thou lookest to me quite ill. Thou art as pale as a sheet. Thou hast never been getting some of that cursed drink, that wicked stuff?"

"Ah, no; there are other devilish things on the earth; other owls in the bog," said Gunnar, and raised himself up slowly.

"Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed the old woman, anxiously. "What can it be? Surely thou art not turned off by the squire? Hast thou got a thrashing? Surely thou hast not—" but the old woman could not say any more, for Gunnar raised himself up to his full height, which was six feet two inches, and quickly answered,

"I turned off by the squire! I got a thrashing from *him*! No; I would not advise him to attempt it. Oh, no! dearest mother, it is indeed *another thing*," continued he, in a low and melancholy voice; "it is all bad for me. Do you know what? Your poor Gunnar is obliged to go and be married!"

"Obliged!" said the old woman, at first a little astonished, but added, after a moment's reflection—"Ay, indeed! I un-

derstand; yes, it is not exactly the thing one likes; but even that is a thing which may be got over."

The old woman did not find the affair either so bad or so desperate as Gunnar himself, or as he believed she would.

"Well, and with which of the girls at the Hall may it be, because I can't think but it must be one of them? It can not be that impudent Lena, however?" asked Mother Ingrid.

"Yes, it is precisely *she*," replied Gunnar, with a deep sigh; and then recounted to his mother, but with greater amplification than he had done to Bengt, how that "Satan's drop," at Aspas had brought about his ruin, as he called it. Beyond this he told her—for he believed it would comfort her a little—that he was to go to a good farm at Lady-day, to have a splendid wedding at the Hall, and perhaps have a little help from the gentry to begin the world with. When he had ended, the old woman began the following monologue, because we must acknowledge that Gunnar lay down with closed eyes, and heard only little of what his mother said. He in no wise either despised what she said or went to sleep; but he rather lay and compared all his former rosy dreams with the thistly and thorny realities; compared the future which he had imagined with the one which stood grinning before him; sighed and compared.

In the mean time the old woman went on talking.

"Yes, yes," sighed she, "even *here* that devilish brandy has something to do in the business! But it may go better than one thinks for. Yes, God the Father give thee happiness and joy in this thy marriage, as in every thing else, my dearest Gunnar!" The old woman pondered a little, and then went on:

"So, so; in the statutes, then. But what a piece of folly it was! A lad might be decoyed by a pretty girl, but not by an old woman. But perhaps thy memory deceives thee. Oh, yes; no doubt. And a farm thou art to have is a very good thing: and a wedding thou art to have—dost thou not say? at the Hall, and dancing money.* It ought to be splendid, however. And so at spring thou art to go to Vika—but for that, look you, there will be wanted a cow, and other outfit, but perhaps that will come out of the dancing-money; but Lena is sure to put the best foot foremost, as the saying is."

Again she paused, and then inquired, "Well, and do you think that I shall be asked to the wedding?"

* The money which the wedding guests give to the bride. (Author's note.)

This last question, which was asked in a high and somewhat firm voice, roused up Gunnar, and he said, "Yes, bless you, dear mother; of that you may be sure."

"Yes, that you'll do of a certainty," said Mother Ingrid; "ask Lena for a new bit of edging for my old 'lin,* and for another ribbon for my white cap, otherwise I can not at all come among such a parcel of folks."

"Oh, no, dearest mother," returned Gunnar; "be sure of this, that I never will ask any thing of Lena; I would a thousand times rather buy them for you among the things to-morrow in the town."

"Oh, bless me! thou shalt not lay out of thy poor hard-earned money on that trifle; thou wilt want all thou hast, and more than that, for thyself."

"Oh, never mind; it will suffice to purchase more than I shall want to-morrow in the town; and, look you, I want some advice," replied Gunnar, in a tone of indifference.

"Let me see; what, shalt thou buy every thing to-morrow?" asked the old woman.

"Yes," answered Gunnar, with the most freezing indifference; "there must be bought a ring, and then a book, and then a pair of gloves, and then she will have a silk handkerchief."

"Hush!" said the old warm-hearted mother, and hastened out to an ancient jet-black chest. "Hush! a silk handkerchief thou shalt have from me, and that a fine one too! If thou wilt buy me a bit of edging and ribbon, and a morsel of snuff besides, then I can help thee with thy wedding presents, and thou shalt have a silk handkerchief in return."

With this the old woman went to the chimney, lighted again a brand, and then unfolding triumphantly something which she held in her hand, and upon which she threw the light of the stick, she advanced to Gunnar, who all this time lay upon the hard wooden sofa.

"See, thou best one!" said the kindly-intentioned old woman, holding the blazing stick in her mouth; and Gunnar actually saw a dark piece of stuff, not really worn out, but altogether the worse for wear, and in which one single color could not be distinguished from another, looking altogether of a gray-brown hue, which of itself testified of its great age.

* The piece of muslin which is placed under the cap, cut of the same shape, and *always* furnished with a lace border, either narrower or wider. (Author's note.)

Gunnar took the old handkerchief, held it a little way from him, and it looked so unsightly to him that he was compelled to say—

"Ah, no, dearest mother, keep your silk handkerchief yourself. It is handsome enough, one must confess; but Lena, you see, will have something which is showy: she must have one with red, and green, and yellow, and all colors in it."

"Oh!" said the mother, a little repiningly, because she had always set a high value on this silk handkerchief, which had been given to her among her "bride gifts" in former days. "I think she is showy enough herself, with her coal-black eyes, her red cheeks, and her black parted hair, that she should be satisfied with dark-colored clothes, now that she is going to be a peasant's wife. Yes, yes," sighed the old woman, while she again folded it up with the greatest care, and replaced her treasure, still with the burning stick in her mouth. "Ay, ay; haughty and full of vanity, that she is, my poor Gunnar!"

Gunnar sighed; but whether it was with thinking of the haughtiness and vanity of Lena, or that the expression, "My poor Gunnar," from his mother's lips, called forth the sighs from her son's breast, is not so easy to determine. When a person suffers, he sighs if he be pitied, he sighs if he be not pitied, he sighs for every thing.

Gunnar had eaten his supper before he left the Hall; and besides this, if he had not, his mother had really nothing to give him, except a few sour apples, which Gunnar accepted with thanks, but did not eat, because he laid himself down, and, thanks to youth and labor, old age and weariness, sleep, that angel of the night, descended into the humble cottage, and laid its beneficent finger upon the eyes of both mother and son.

CHAPTER IV.

EARLY the following morning, Gunnar was ready to go to the town. He took a hasty but cordial farewell of his mother, who blessed at once, both solemnly and earnestly, his "incoming and his outgoing;" promised to come of a certainty to see her again on Christmas-day, and to bring with him the edging, the

ribbon, and the snuff, and something besides these, which he was always accustomed to carry with him on the Christmas-day.

On his arrival in the city, Gunnar went first of all to the goldsmith's, handled and examined his rings, but allowed the shopkeeper himself to select one suitable for the large pattern, which was wrapped in paper, and Gunnar then paid five-and-twenty per cent. more than it was worth, according to a stereotyped joke of the goldsmiths, who are accustomed to make an extra charge whenever a handsome young peasant comes to buy a wedding-ring. This was of silver gilt, and in three large wavy stripes, so that it almost seemed as if there were three rings. After that he went to the bookbinder's, and asked to look at a "handsome book in a cover;" as, however, the bookseller was a cross old fellow, he escaped the customary joke, and paid for it merely the two rix-dollars. After that he went on to shopkeeper Bäckrot's, in the market-place. A little young lady stood in the shop, whom Gunnar knew, because he had often been there on errands, for both the squire and Ma'msell Sara.

"Yes," said Gunnar, embarrassed, when she came forward to serve him at the counter; "now I should like to have gloves, and a handsome silk handkerchief, some edging, and a cap."

Ma'msell attended to these somewhat enigmatical desires politely, kindly, and with smiles, all the while replying to the incessant questions of other peasant men and women, who were asking "what was the price of fish this year," and "of treacle," and "Christmas spices," and "mould candles," because "on St. Thomas's day is the fair in every town," as the proverb says, and as the truth is, and the peasants then provide for their small Christmas wants; that is to say, fish, spice, candles, snuff, and tobacco.

When Gunnar turned his steps homeward, he was continually saluted by his acquaintance, who, some riding and some walking, overtook or were overtaken by him on the road, each one with an ugly, long, dry, curled fish, called *rokka*, and a candle fastened in their hat; and, for the rest, with faces more or less red, in part from the keen severity of the season, or from the brandy, which was every where to be met with.

"Bless me! what a long face he has!" said many of those who saw Gunnar on the way; but many a creditable person

saw not alone *one* Gunnar, but often *two*; and if the sun had pleased to show himself on that December day, they had of a certainty seen double suns likewise; and after that none at all, for then their heavy eyelids would have closed.

As soon as Gunnar reached home, he went up into his loft, hung up his holyday clothes, put on his working-day suit, and, late as it was in the day, went out to work.

"Nay, you?" said Bengt, inquiringly.

"Yes, you!" replied Gunnar; "now it is settled and done."

And with that the conversation ceased, for Gunnar had now as little inclination for talking and merriment as he formerly had pleasure in it.

Christmas-eve was a dreadful time for Gunnar. During the whole forenoon he was invisible; nobody knew where he was; and at noon it was hardly possible to get him into the kitchen, where, according to an ancient custom on Christmas-eve, they "dipped in the pot,"* although he had not tasted the least morsel for breakfast. The weather was cold, the air full of snow, dark and heavy, so that only a very few from the Hall were at church, but these few quite sufficient to trumpet it abroad when they came home, that the banns had been published between Gunnar and Lena.

Lena walked about as proudly as a turkey-cock, but Bengt was obliged to drag poor Gunnar into the kitchen; and when he was fairly come in there was an end of all their laughter and jokes; and, worst of all, they fancied they saw something about Lena which they had not seen before, and which Gunnar could least of all comprehend had he looked at her, but he did not do so, and took the idle talk of the others for the coarse raillery which was customary among peasants. Lena began to be in some measure less proud, and even seemed a little abashed, on account of all that was said; and as she actually loved the young and handsome Gunnar with all the passion and the unbridled impulses of a woman's heart, she began to endeavor, by good words and a friendly behavior, to overcome his extreme coldness. By assiduous fondness, and, at the same time, by caustic and bitter words, she had gained nothing, which she had thought very extraordinary; now, therefore, she desired to do every thing to let Gunnar

* They take off with bread the fat which floats on the top of the pot in which meat is boiling. (Author's note.)

see her kind disposition, and that the other servants should not have to say, "Poor Gunnar was compelled to marry her." In the evening, therefore, when the servants had ended the singing of a psalm, she left the abundantly-supplied Christmas table, and went out to Gunnar with a large bundle in her hand, and said to him, in a friendly and almost bashful manner,

"Dear Gunnar, I pray you to go home to-morrow to your mother, as is customary with you on Christmas-day. Greet her kindly from me, and beg her to be so friendly as to take in good part the present of my Christmas-tore, because I have no person nearer than her to give it to. My mother and sister are a long way from here; if the letter reaches them, then my sister at least will come here to—to our wedding."

The cunning Lena knew that his mother was the apple of Gunnar's eye, and that in this way she should be best able to move his heart, besides which she should stand in a good point of view before him, if she could make him believe that she felt attached to his mother.

"Many thanks," said Gunnar, making an embarrassed movement, and taking, both willingly and unwillingly, the bundle which held the customary "Christmas hoard," or the four loaves of the various kinds of bread which every one receives, a quantity of Christmas candles, together with some pastry, apples, and other small trifles, collected from the evening's abundance.

CHAPTER V.

THE morning of Christmas-day was unusually bright, mild, and beautiful, and therefore brought a thaw with it; and as Bengt had asked permission to accompany Gunnar, the two young men set off early, long before daybreak. The waning moon shone brightly with a pure light upon the new-fallen snow, which had not come down in any quantity, but only lightly and smoothly, as if to adorn the old dingy earth for Christmas; and as the road was very wild and untracked, but at the same time one of unusual beauty, this morning's journey

was possessed of a certain poetical delight which was by no means unperceived by these uneducated beings, who, however, had never heard *the word* poetry, but in whose hearts *the thing* itself found all the more room.

"Bless me!" said Bengt, "such a beautiful and fine Christmas dawn I think I never saw before."

"You say truly," replied Gunnar, "nor I either; and, do you know, Bengt, I have for my part a great desire to go to Norrlanda church. The cross-roads are not so very far round, and I think that it would really be something glorious and soothing to go in this divinely-beautiful Christmas dawn to hear the word of God, and to see all the lights burn, and then to hear the organ, which is my delight always; and, do you know, they have such a one at Norrlanda as we can hardly match in our parish."

"Yes, above all things," replied Bengt; and the two young men began visibly to increase their speed; for although Gunnar had spoken about the cross-roads not being much longer, yet it was a good three or four miles out of the way, one thing taken with another.

"God be praised and thanked that you *wish* for something!" said Bengt, after they had walked rapidly on some time in silence. "Of a truth I was regularly afraid for you all this week. You went about like some one who seeks for an opportunity to put an end to himself. I thanked God, of a truth, every evening when you came in, and had seated yourself in the servants' room, for I always feared lest you should not come, but be found hanging by a rope, or lying in a marsh, or that you should have shot yourself."

Gunnar walked on in silence.

"Yes, yes, you did go and think about something bad; I was not mistaken about it," continued Bengt, who was strengthened in his dreadful surmise by the silence of Gunnar.

"Oh, no!" replied Gunnar, after some reflection, "I never had such wicked thoughts, although I many a time prayed for death, if such were but His will. No, suicide I shall never commit, seeing I did it not when father died, and my brother fell into misfortune, and all that we were possessed of was burned to the ground, and all that because of wicked brandy. For, you see, father had the bad habit of drinking, and he taught it to Jonas, and Jonas fell into all sort of crime and misery, and went out tramping about the country, we never

knew where. One evening, however, he came home, and looked wretched and forlorn; we had not seen him then for many months, and he looked about in every corner of the room, as if he were afraid of something. Mother offered him something to eat, but he insisted on having nothing but brandy; and so the bottle was brought out, and they sat themselves down to drink, both father and Jonas, and that lasted till late in the night; and so both mother and I, since we found it was in vain to beg and pray of them to leave off, went and laid us down. At last father rolled under the table. Then we awoke (though mother had never slept at all), and it was with great difficulty that mother and I got him to bed; for, you see, Jonas did not offer to help a bit. And then mother prayed him so exceedingly earnestly, and with such tender words, to leave off drinking, and to go and lie down with me on the sofa; but he said absolutely, 'No' to it all; for he was not so excessively drunk, because he could bear such a deal of liquor; but when the brandy was all drank out, he swore a little about it, but soon after lighted father's tobacco-pipe and went out. We fancied he would soon come in again, so we lay down and left the door unfastened for him; but he did not ever come in again, and we slept soundly. But, merciful Heaven, what a waking we had! All the room was in a bright blaze—the cow-shed and barn were already burned down!

"It was with the utmost difficulty that mother and I could get father out, and little, if any thing, from the house. We took and laid father on the cold ground, for he slept like a stone, and Jonas was not any where to be found. But you may fancy, dear Bengt, that, nevertheless, that was not the worst; the day after the fire father died, and that same day they took up Jonas, who had escaped out of the house of correction. That same day he was taken to the assizes to receive his sentence, and that was the reason why he would not sleep in the house, but went out and lay down in the hay-loft, to which he set fire with his lighted pipe, for that the fire came from the cow-shed was shown by the wind. He had driven out the cattle—that was the only thing he had thought about before he made his escape; but he never imagined that the fire would extend to the dwelling-house—I never can believe him bad enough for that.

"And now I can tell you that the day father was buried, when mother had not any thing to put over her head, and

when they came home from the assizes, and told that Jonas, whom they had taken again, had been flogged, then I went out to a great deep well which we had, and there I stood a long time, and looked down into the well, for, you see, I was not then confirmed, and God forgive me the thoughts which I had, because they were not good! and if I *then* did not throw myself into the well, I shall not do it *now*, when I know better, but shall try to bear my lot, however dark it may seem to be."

"Bless me!" said Bengt, in astonishment; "and you have never spoken to me about all this business before! And yet I have heard that there was a fire, and that you had a scoundrel of a brother, who is since dead, but I never knew how all this had gone."

"Oh, no," replied Gunnar; "it was, believe me, nothing so agreeable to talk about, and I should not have talked about it now either if it had not been so long since, and if I had not wished to prove to you that I never shall make away with myself, when I did not do it *then*."

"Was it, then, really your intention to throw yourself head first into the well?" inquired Bengt, astonished.

"Yes, my actual intention."

"And how happened it that you did not?"

"Ay, that I will tell you also. It was no merit of mine, believe me, but it was a dog that I had, which was called Zemire, that came and licked my legs and fondled me, and seemed as if it saluted me from mother, of whom I was so excessively fond that it was almost to avoid seeing her suffering that I was about to put an end to myself; and then, when I saw the dog looking just as if it spoke to me from her, I began to weep for the first time, and I wept very much; and then Zemire went on and I followed, and she kept looking back at every step she took, to see that I came with her; and it was very affecting to see, for it seemed all the time as if mother had told her to do it. And in that way we went on, Zemire going first and I after her, till we reached a miserable brew-house or kiln which we had, and which had not been burned down; and there sat mother upon a little chest, which we had succeeded in dragging out of the flames when the house was burned. She was weeping violently; but when she saw me come she threw her arms around me, and thanked God so fervently because I was saved to her; and then was I thoroughly glad that I had not destroyed myself and had thus spared her

that sorrow. But now we will not talk any longer about these melancholy times. God be praised that they are passed, which is best! and now if I could only see things clear before me, and could get all right with that Vika and with Lena, and could manage to take mother home to live with me, so that she need not live in the wood all lonesome and helpless, and if she, Lena, would behave kindly toward mother, and not lead her a dog's life, then, perhaps, in the long run, it might turn out well. What do you think about it, Bengt?"

"Ay, faith, that I do believe!" replied Bengt, who had an indescribable satisfaction in again seeing Gunnar gay and cheerful, and who had, besides this, long since accustomed himself to the thoughts of the marriage. In a general way, Bengt neither thought long nor much on any subject, nor troubled himself greatly about any thing. "At Vika," continued he, "you can live in a famously grand and gallant style; and thou must have a man-servant to do day labor on the farm; and as thou knowest me to be as good as any other, I shall give warning to leave in spring, and so go and live with thee in the autumn; and that will be prodigiously charming and pleasant, and we two, together, shall be able to keep Lena in order, so that she does not become unmanageable."

Gunnar was silent for some time, and then said, "No, Bengt; do you know, that would never answer. First of all, as to what you say about its being so charming and pleasant to live with me as a servant, look at it a little nearer, and it will not do at all. No, it would never turn out well in the end, for you to be man and me master. You know that we are good friends, and if I should *think* any thing, then I must either hold my tongue about it, or if I should speak my mind, then you might get angry, and that might make me angry, and so we should get to words, and then there would be a quarrel, and you would leave me, and with that there would be an end of our friendship and our joy. No; a man-servant I must have, but it shall not be my best friend, he whom I will have now and then as a guest, and entertain with every thing which the house contains. And, besides this, you must consider what little wages and poor living there will be at a poor cottager's in comparison with a gentleman's house. No; that would cause a dreadful difference, which would distress both you and me: things are best as they are."

When Gunnar said these last words, the remembrance of

Lena passed through his mind, whom it seemed impossible for him to learn to endure, and he sighed deeply and sorrowfully, but with that manly and subdued sorrow which will neither bewail itself, nor which seeks to be bewailed.

"Oh, bless me!" answered Bengt, a little vexed; "I thought it would be so capital, and that you would be so pleased with it; but perhaps you are right, after all. You are far wiser than I am; I often find that out, although you did let Lena draw you astray."

Gunnar made no answer: he could now no longer continue the conversation about his misfortunes; they were confirmed, and there was no advantage in talking about them. Gunnar was one of those rare beings, gifted with so clear an intellect, that he learned by instinct the value of words, and taught himself not to make use of the tinkling brass, unless some profit were to be derived from it.

The two young men, through snow, moorland, and morass, had found for themselves a path through the wood, and were approaching the church they had spoken of, the sound of whose organ already was heard in the calm and clear winter morning, which was now lighted only by the thousand starry lamps of night, which would shortly retire before the single magnificent star of day.

"Good heavens!" said Gunnar, half to himself and half to Bengt; "how beautiful it is, though, to come out from the dark wood, and then to see how bright it shines through the tall arched windows of the old church; and to hear the psalms and the organ which sound from it! It makes me feel quite as if I must shed tears; and God knows what that evil must be, which would not in some sort yield before such a sight as this, and such singing and music!"

Bengt sighed with a feeling of devotion, and felt in degree something of that of which Gunnar spoke, but, of a truth, far less deeply and less fervently. Silently, and with their hats before their mouths, the two entered into the sacred building, and stood in the aisle just before the pulpit, which a young man, at that moment, softly and solemnly entered. He spoke powerful and fervent words to the assembled people; spoke about their serious and holy duties to God and man; and, when Gunnar came out of the church into the gray dawn of morning, it was with the full intention of enduring Lena, and endeavoring to love her. But how he succeeded in this we

leave at this time; such resolutions as these are among the most difficult of all to act upon.

The sun had already ascended over the edge of the mountain when the two young men arrived at Gunnar's mother's, who was sitting alone close within the chimney, singing out of an old hymn-book, and every now and then, in the midst of it, blowing the embers on the hearth, that they might not go out.

"So there thou art really!" said the old woman, joyfully, as Gunnar and Bengt entered. "I did not believe thou wouldst have come to-day as thou wast here so lately."

"But I said that I really should come as usual," returned Gunnar, a little annoyed at the old woman's doubt.

"Oh, yes, you young fellows promise so much, and perform so little," said Mother Ingrid; and then at the same moment welcomed Bengt with a friendly "God's peace be with you, Bengt! How are you? Good Christmas, my child! What now shall old Ingrid feast you with this Christmas-day? Ah!" sighed she, "it is not now with us as in the days of our prosperity! Then I might have had *something*, now there is nothing, or little enough."

Gunnar sighed deeply, and even Bengt could not resist a tear which started to his eyes as he thought upon the downfall and the misfortunes of this poor household, of which he had heard from Gunnar only so lately.

Before long, however, a sort of cheerfulness, called forth by Bengt, returned to them; for Bengt's tears ever fell over a laughing mouth, and he now began to talk a deal of idle nonsense to Mother Ingrid, who, we must confess, willingly listened to the cheerful-hearted young man, to whom the world, with all its great and small troubles, was nevertheless "a merry little world," as he was accustomed to express himself when he was in his gay and lively humor. The two young men brought out their bundles, and, with the help of a little butter and a little boiled milk, they both of them made, spite of the walk, a very delicious meal. Gunnar obtained the most extraordinary praise from Mother Ingrid for the edging and the new cap, all which the old woman contemplated with all the light which the little room afforded, not forgetting the blaze of the burning coals.

In the twilight, before the young men set out to go home, they talked a little, but very little, about the wedding which was to take place on Twelfth-day, and it was agreed that Bengt

should come and fetch the old woman, who could not by herself find her way through the wood.

"Ay, truly," said Bengt; "on this subject it shall go like a dance, and Mother Ingrid shall climb like a goat in the clefts of the mountains, and I shall take care that she does not tumble down, that we may not bring a funeral feast into the middle of the wedding dinner, for that would be very dull and troublesome; that it would!"

On their homeward way, Bengt said to Gunnar, "I think you might have comforted the dear old soul a little more, when she cried, and said that now you were going a deal farther off, and she should never get to see you, and such like. I think you then might have told her you would take her to live with you at Vika."

"Oh, no!" returned Gunnar; "it was better not. I will first of all see how Lena behaves herself; for never, no *never* could I bear that she should behave ill to mother without my calling her to account. No, I thank you; I will first see how every thing goes on before I remove the old woman."

CHAPTER VI.

CHRISTMAS passed as usual, but every one, as well as Lena, saw how manly and grave was Gunnar's demeanor, and how all at once a change had come over him, from his being the most light-hearted and the gayest of youths; so that she now almost shrunk before his stern glances, and endeavored in all kind of ways to give him pleasure, till he even began to believe that Lena, after all, might be a good sort of person, though it was so horribly difficult to make himself tolerate her.

Gunnar was also in another difficult strait at this time, between Christmas-day and Twelfth-day, but which he likewise overcame. To make this intelligible we must go back for some considerable time. He had, several years before, when the valet was away on military service, waited upon the tutor, a young and amiable man, with a pure heart, pure habits, and one who took a cheerful view of things. The tutor, who had taken degrees in the college, and was called the magister, took

a great liking to, and attached himself to his new attendant. Some time after this, when he fell sick of the scarlet fever, the tutor was often with him, gave him books, and read to him.

He was now, therefore, inexpressibly angry that they should throw away his favorite upon "that infamous, ugly, and abominable piece of goods," as he called Lena—perhaps not so altogether without reason. The tutor, young, and loving liberty himself, thought that such a misfortune would be worse than any other. He represented this to the squire with great openness; but the squire turned a deaf ear, laughed—although the laughter was a poor affair—and said, "They were already asked in church; that there was no good in talking any more about it."

He represented to the old, honorable, and wise Ma'msell Sara, the absurdity and the incompatibility of this union; but she answered with a sigh—

"Ah, yes! what can one do? In a large house, with many servants, order and discipline must be maintained. This marriage is shockingly against my feelings, but they are now both satisfied, as it seems; and, besides, they are asked in church."

The tutor preached to Gunnar, and besought him, for God's sake, to get out of this affair while it was yet possible; but Gunnar answered firmly and determinedly:

"Yes, it often appears so dark to me, as if it might be the death of me; but I have said it. The pastor has received my promise, and God at the same time, and I will not flinch from it."

The young tutor, who was somewhat smitten by the epidemic of *Det gar an*,* talked broad and wide about how, if one took a wife whom one did not love, for whom one had no *sympathies*, whose inward being was not in harmony with our inward being, and to which merely feelings of duty dragged us, and a deal more of the same—then one bound a millstone round one's neck for one's whole life. But the young peasant inquired calmly whether it were not still worse that perjury and injustice should bind a millstone upon the conscience? "which of a surety would, in the end, drag it downward." And he continued firm in his determination.

The *educated man* remonstrated, called a number of arguments to his assistance, which were neither weak nor false, and, above all things, of the highest importance, according to

* See Howitt's Journal, vol. ii., page 212.

his view of the business; but the *uneducated man* had an answer for them all, and his replies were so simple, so pure—they were diamonds broken from the rock, pearls taken from the mussel—which no one, not even the greatest sophist, could have declared false; and Gunnar's last word was, "Would to God that my conscience would allow me to listen to the word of the tutor! but it shrinks back before the bare thought of escaping from my promise, and I *must* stand by it."

CHAPTER VII.

WE said just now, that Christmas passed on as usual, but these words must be recalled. Outwardly, Christmas was like itself, with its rest from all kinds of work, its infinite abundance of meat, its long holydays, short days, and interminable, often unemployed, evenings; but the soul of all imaginable Christmas pleasures among the many domestics of Grantorp was entirely deadened. Formerly, it was always Gunnar, assisted by Bengt, who devised all possible sorts of games and frolics; and his violin it was, upon which he played with an unusual degree of peasant-skill, which first set the dance in motion, which he then was the most zealous to continue. Gunnar was gifted by nature with an excellent ear, and a strong and clear voice, so that he could play and sing without end; and, hitherto, he had always, in his hours of leisure, and in the twilight of Christmas, amused his companions by these means. His violin was highly valued by himself, and by all the others, as a *ne plus ultra* of violins; and as it hung on the wall of the men-servants' room, close by the side of his loaded gun, nobody dared to touch them, or hardly to look at them, because, if they did, they all knew they should offend Gunnar, and have a strict calling to account. "Let my violin alone!" or "Let my gun alone!" were words so often repeated by Gunnar, that they became a proverb in the family, which was made use of whenever any one would forbid another to touch or to look into any thing.

And a rare violin it was; for if there were sometimes a string gone, as would happen to this violin as well as to all others, then Gunnar would sing the melody with a clear voice,

and play a sort of impromptu accompaniment upon the three strings, and would say afterward, "It is, indeed, an extraordinary affair, this violin of mine!"

But now, both gun and violin hung silent and dusty upon the wall. Gunnar, who was possessed of a quick eye, and who was a lucky marksman, was accustomed to go out with his gun on the mornings of holydays, "to spring upon a springer," as he himself said; and then would often come home from the deep woods in good time on Sundays, but weary and warm, and with a fine Sunday's roast for Ma'msell Sara, whereby he did not sink, but, on the contrary, rose, in her favor. But now there came no white hare, or dark-plumaged bird into the kitchen. Gunnar started no leaping creature in the wood, and his loaded gun remained hanging on the wall; he also played but a short and silent part in a Christmas drama, which was, nevertheless, within a hair's-breadth of becoming a tragedy.

But before we can give an account of this, we must introduce on the scene two new personages. In the first place, a red-haired, ill-favored, crafty, ill-tempered, and jealous servant in the distillery, called Olle, who, a considerable time ago, paid court to Lena, but without much success, from which cause he now could not bear her; and also the tidy kitchen-maid, little Lisa, towards whom Olle had for some time been looking with kindly eyes, partly for the sake of her rosy, cheerful countenance and small delicate figure, and partly because every kitchen-maid always *can*, if she *will*, treat the one who finds favor in her eyes, with meat and good things; and now Still-man Olle, as he was generally called, was not only particularly devoted to the abundant brandy which he himself helped to prepare in the great distillery, the smell of which reached Grantorp night and day, but was likewise a great lover of *la bonne chère* (a yet untranslated Gallicism).

But now, as "chance," and, one must allow, misfortune for Still-man Olle, would have it, Lisa, the little, tidy Lisa *always* laid the largest portion of bacon, the longest slice of sausage, the best pickled meat, and the choicest pudding, upon Gunnar's plate, and also laded up the most barley in his gruel, and the greatest quantity of little pieces of meat in his soup, and laid the thickest cake before him. Nobody—certainly not Gunnar himself, who did not occupy his thoughts with little Lisa—was so exact an observer of this as Still-man Olle; and every time that such an instance of little Lisa's regard occurred, Olle's

hatred and jealousy of Gunnar increased, because not in *one* instance, but in *all*, this man stood in his way.

Olle, with neither ear nor voice, fancied that he could play the violin; but as he was a drunkard, and had hardly clothes to his body, much less any personal effects, he of a certainty was not worth a violin. He often endeavored, either by insolent demands or by craft, to possess himself of Gunnar's; but he had now been so often defeated that he hardly dared to renew the attempt. Every thing which concerned Gunnar excited his anger and his envy; and now this approaching wedding, and the fact of Gunnar's receiving a little farm, assistance from the gentlefolks of the hall, etc., for all of which Gunnar would gladly have given half his life could he but have escaped from them, excited Olle no little.

When, therefore, the banns for Gunnar and Lena had been published for the third and last time, Bengt, when he came in from church, said, with tearful eyes, to his comrades in the men-servants' room, "Yes, now it is done! Now Gunnar is as good as a married man."

Gunnar sat by, silent as a wall, with his eyes fixed gloomily on a distant bench.

"Yes," continued Still-man Olle, maliciously, "it is so; now he is as good as a married fellow; and Lena, at all events, now gets *one* safe father for her child."

Gunnar looked up hastily, looked at Still-man Olle, but lightning flashed from his glance; and, rising up softly and solemnly, he walked up to his gun, and, laying his hand upon it, said in a tone of voice in which lay the superlative degree of gravity, "Do not say that word again, Olle!"

Olle rushed away into the chimney corner behind Bengt and an old press which stood there, and begged earnestly for pardon, declaring that it was nothing at all but a pure jest.

"Yes," replied Gunnar, shortly, "either I or my gun shall teach you to jest."

Gunnar had the best and the tenderest of hearts. He could not bear to see even a worm suffer, and by will or knowledge would never have caused pain to a living being; nevertheless, if people excited him—and his passions were hastily roused—he knew not for a moment what he did, and then of a certainty, it was the best to get out of his way, for at such a moment the life of man was as nothing to him; and against our own will, we must acknowledge to Gunnar's shame, that

he already had been once compelled to pay a fine for manslaughter, and this circumstance had given him a still greater abhorrence of brandy, upon which then, also, the blame was laid. Had Gunnar, however, known himself better, he would rather have complained of his shockingly violent temper, which would slumber calmly for so long a time, but which all at once woke up, raging horribly for a short period.

It was not long, however, before Gunnar and Olle were tolerably good friends again; because, although Gunnar was so easily irritated his anger was not of long duration; and as Still-man Olle was in the highest degree a man of false character, he could often, when any advantage was to be gained by it, disguise himself and entirely conceal his malignant and envious disposition. It was thus he acted during the Christmas week, and as he saw Gunnar's disinclination for his violin and for every thing else, he begged leave to play "a little while, quite beautifully, upon Gunnar's violin;" and occasionally it was granted, and, what was still more, Gunnar stood not now, as formerly, when Still-man Olle enjoyed this favor, like a brooding hen by his side, to take care of his treasure. On the contrary, he now let him work away as best he could upon the violin, but going out most frequently himself, with his fingers in his impatient and keenly-sensitive ears, which instinctively suffered from the false notes, and saying as he went out, "Dear me! I cannot bear to hear how badly thou playest; it cuts like a sharp, or rather like a dull knife through my whole body, from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet."

And Bengt sighed; because, thought he to himself, "if he do not trouble himself about his violin, but lets Olle do with it what he will, then depend upon it, it is bad with him."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE wedding-day advanced with hasty strides. It was, as we know, fixed for Twelfth-day, and was expected with great impatience by all except by the bridegroom.

The Squire certainly was not a good man, but not a very bad one, either; and whether it was from cunning, from cal-

culatation, or from a little touch of goodness of heart, one can not justly determine, but in certain cases he actually was what is called good to his domestics and dependants, because, while at the same time that he was an extremely severe and exacting master, who required that every one should labor and endeavor to his utmost ability, still he was tolerably just, and often quite generous. Gunnar had now served him ever since his seventeenth year, thus for seven full years; first as stable boy, and then as laboring man; besides which, he had in every case perfectly fulfilled all the duties imposed upon him by his master, and *therefore* he should now have a great and respectable wedding. Lena had served for three years at Grantorp, and had a good character; therefore should she also, before the world's eyes, receive honor, though in a less degree; but as they *two* were to become *one*, the Squire had his reasons for wishing that there should be no difference made, but merely recommended to the proper executive power, Ma'msell Sara, that nothing should be spared, but that it should be a respectable wedding. With this Ma'msell Sara was not dissatisfied; for she was just to the utmost, and goodness and benevolence filled her heart; and as she never could rightly charge upon Lena any thing worse than her unpleasing appearance, as well as now and then a little outbreak of malice against her companions, which might be attributed to her violent temper, while, on the contrary, she always found her willing, regular, exact, and clever in her service, as well as quick in every kind of woman's occupation in a great house in the country; therefore Ma'msell Sara also wished that she should be rewarded with a respectable wedding. As regarded Gunnar, she was accustomed to say, "I know that it is doing wrong, when we are trusted with a governing power, ever to have a favorite; but when we find some one who keeps to the law in *every thing*, then it is difficult to avoid it." And Gunnar was her favorite. Quick, willing, regular, and never at a loss, was he at all times. Besides which, he was sober and honest; and lastly, he was—what all ladies in the country set a great value upon—a pretty good carpenter. If any thing fell to pieces, a bed, a table, a chair, or if there needed a little footstool, drawer, or shelf, or if the troublesome loom got somewhat into disorder, Gunnar was instantly summoned, and he always immediately understood what the question was about, and, which pleased Ma'msell Sara as much, always knew how to remedy it. In

his leisure hours he had made an arm chair and a dresser for his old mother, and Lena often used to tell her companions about all the household goods which she meant to let Gunnar make when they came to Vika. Lena was very vain, and would have every thing as excellent as possible, a fault which Ma'msell Sara saw plainly enough, and shook her head over; but, as this did not properly interfere with her usefulness in service, she looked upon it, taken in connection with Lena's quickness, cleverness, and ability, as not so dangerous a failing.

It may be said with regard to Ma'msell Sara, that what she prepared for this wedding was done from a sense of justice as regarded Lena, but both from a sense of justice and *con amore* as far as Gunnar was concerned; and great and extraordinary were these preparations.

CHAPTER IX.

On the morning of Twelfth-day, when Bengt, impelled by a peculiar uneasiness, rose up before dawn, and made a fire in the men-servants' room by four o'clock, he missed Gunnar. His first impulse, after a low exclamation of "Merciful God!" was to cast a glance at the gun. But it hung there peaceably beside its old acquaintance, the violin; and Bengt heaved a deep sigh, partly from the pleasure of this discovery, and partly from grief, because he must shortly not only lose from the wall these two old acquaintances, but Gunnar himself, which was worse. In the mean time he did not trouble himself greatly about the fire, but dressed in haste, and went out, in the first place, to clear up the question concerning Gunnar, and then to set out for his mother, whom he had promised to fetch.

When he got out into the pitch-black morning, he looked around him, a little doubtful in what direction he should steer his course; but, while he stood wondering which would be the best, the old ox-herd came up, who, whether on holidays or whatever day it might be, never forgot his beloved oxen or neglected his duties. He came out with a lantern in his hand, and as soon as he saw Bengt, he said—

"The bridegroom sends his compliments to you. He bade me tell you that he is gone after his mother himself; but he told me to say that you must go and meet him about ten o'clock."

"Ah! I think I shall hardly trouble myself about that," muttered Bengt, rather vexed, "if he could not trust me about such a thing. To be sure, it would be fine slipping and sliding after an old woman, through wood and snow and morass, but then I thought he might have trusted me for all that."

Bengt went in again, and laid himself down, but he could not sleep.

And why had Gunnar really gone himself this time, as he knew so well that Bengt could do this errand, and would not fail in any way; and, besides, when he must have been aware that this conduct would wound Bengt, whom he was so heartily attached to?

Yes! the tutor's words had, after all, taken root in Gunnar's soul; and Lena's good behavior of late had done the same, and from these two opposite causes had arisen a peculiar doubt, a hesitation and a disquiet in the young man's soul, which he resolved to confide to the maternal bosom. When Gunnar went out of the men-servants' room, he took with him mechanically all the money of which he was possessed; his watch and a couple of shirts under his arm; and when he passed through the door of the men-servants' room, he turned himself hastily round, walked to the dark corner which held Bengt's bed, and thought hastily, "Perhaps I may never see him more, and then—may God be with him! And, perhaps, I may never more enter this door, and then—may God be merciful to me!"

With that, he went, with long and rapid strides, notwithstanding the dismal darkness; but he had, during these seven years, gone this way so many times, that every step which he took, whether to the right hand or whether to the left, was known to him. At about six o'clock he was at Mother Ingrid's cottage, and he knocked immediately at the bolted door, because he saw that there was already a light through the little cracked window. And there was a light; because Mother Ingrid had already made a little fire on the hearth, and now stood before it washing her old face with a bit of soap, that she might be regularly fine, clean, and shining upon her Gunnar's wedding-day.

"What! are you here already, dear Bengt?" said she, and

opened the door, but stepped backward, when she saw Gunnar, pale, and, as the mother's heart and the mother's eyes could instantly perceive, with an unusual look, and a strange expression of countenance.

"What, in the Lord's name, is on foot, that *thou* art here to-day?" exclaimed the old woman, and almost staggered backward.

"Nothing, nothing at all, dearest mother!" said Gunnar, and threw himself, wearied with his hasty walk and the thoughts which drew him forward, upon the old sofa; pushed his hair, wet with sweat, from his brow, and looked strangely around him.

"Thou shouldst hardly say that to *me*," answered Mother Ingrid; "I am too old, and I know thee too well, not to see that something bad is afloat; but, look you, I can not say what it is, I confess!"

"Oh, no, mother; do not be so unreasonably frightened! Do not stand and tremble, and let thy teeth chatter; but come and sit here, and then I will quite candidly tell thee how it is; and it is because I want to talk a little with thee to-day that I come before Bengt."

"Talk with me! and that just to-day! Yea, yea, it must indeed be a wonderful piece of business that thou wilt talk about! Merciful Lord Jesus! what shall I now be doomed to hear again? Never hitherto hast *thou* given me a moment's sorrow, and I was now, notwithstanding all things, both glad and satisfied at thy marriage. But I see plainly that some dust comes into the milk, and that thou—"

"Ah!" interrupted Gunnar; "sometimes you see such a many specks in the bright day; but, look you, it is not to be wondered at when you have suffered so much trouble. But if I now tell you that it stands for nothing; that no one knows that I am come here; that all is exactly as it was; and that—"

"Nay, then, why didst thou come, and not Bengt, as was already fixed?" interrupted the mother.

"Ay, dearest mother, for this reason," replied Gunnar, and wiped away once more the sweat from his brow; "I know not how, but I have some scruples in my mind. I never know, *notwithstanding*, whether . . . whether I shall marry Lena" (the mother made a movement of astonishment). "Nay, nay, do not say any thing before I have said my say. I know well

enough you will argue about the banns, and so on: but on this score I should not trouble myself; there might, indeed, be a little difficulty there, but that I do not ask about—the banns are merely a something to let it be known that two persons wish to be married. That is of small account. But . . . on the contrary, unless the minister read God's words over us it would go for nothing, *that* I knew; and therefore I wish to talk with you before it is too late; to talk with you, and to ask you, dearest mother, for advice, for you never gave me any other than good advice, which God knows, certainly."

"Lord Jesus!" said the mother, sorrowfully, but calmly; "has Lena, then, been behaving disagreeably and badly toward thee within these last few days?"

"No, that is just what she has not done," replied Gunnar, immediately. "She has, on the contrary, been good and kind in every way; and it is exactly for this reason that I have a weight upon my conscience, because, *notwithstanding*—I can not like her! And now, I am afraid that I shall be the cause of all her unhappiness as well as of my own; for, once indissolubly united [an evident reminiscence of the tutor's representations], then we should only make a hell upon earth together, and break asunder from one another [again, a reminiscence]; and therefore it would be a great deal better to make an end of it now; and then—in that case—I should merely go on my own course; go out into the wide world, and seek my fortune; and pay to the child all that I could gain; and—"

"Ah, nay, do not talk any more in that way," interrupted the mother. "I get quite miserable to hear it. Never—no, never did I hear you talk in such a strange way! And I am very much mistaken if somebody has not put this into your head, for what is bad never would come into your mind of itself. You! that you should become a liar and perjurer! run away, and leave wife and child! And that, because—I am ashamed of saying it—she is good and pious! I never heard the like! No, my dear lad! Thou shalt, as is seemly and proper for a good fellow, thou shalt stand by thy word, and try to get over the little dislike thou hast to Lena, when she is good, and like other folks—and thou shalt go on thy future course as God appoints it for thee, and not set up thy will against His; for then, of a surety, it will go ill all thy time. And what, in all the world, is it that thou talkest about the minister not having read God's word over thee and her? Thou

talkest entirely as if God had nothing to do with the affair! What stupid and foolish talk it is! Canst thou, or can any body else, undertake any thing with which God has not had to do? Dost thou not tell the people in the banns that thou art in the mind to marry Lena? Nay, is it not, in other words, declaring before the people that which thou hast promised to God, to her, and to thyself, and for which reason the clergyman gives his blessing from the pulpit to this holy matrimonial bond? Dost thou not remember that? And if thou dost not remember it, then I remember it, and will remind thee of it now while time is before thee. Bless me," continued she, after a little pause, and as Gunnar remained silent, "I never thought to have heard such sentiments from thee—hesitation, scruples, and fickleness—when thou hadst once resolved! See, it is like Jonas, thy brother, the poor lost lad whom, day and night, I pray God to forgive, and not like thee, whom I always trusted so entirely."

"Ah, yes, dearest mother! trust me really, I assure you that is what I desire," said Gunnar, and great tears peared in his eyes. "It was precisely because I did not rightly know whether I should do well or ill by marrying Lena that I wished to ask you. But now I know it, for now you have told it me, and now I believe it; and now will go straight forward to my fate, let it henceforth be what it may: I trust in God and you."

"Yes, do so, my dear, good Gunnar," said the old woman, and dried his eyes, and was glad, and satisfied that she had so easily overcome her son's scruples. But ah! there came a time afterward, and how differently did she think then! How she grieved, for having, by her maternal power, overruled her son! How then did her conscience haunt her, and say that she had spoken a deal about good things, a deal for Gunnar's well-being, but—there was a grain of selfishness also in it too, because she very well understood that Gunnar would merely try how Lena conducted herself before he took his beloved mother under his own roof, but that it should be so nevertheless; and see there!—there was Mother Ingrid's Eldorado for this world. But how many a time in after days—for Mother Ingrid's life was not a short one—did she exclaim, with deep sighs, and, thinking upon this morning of Twelfth-day, "Oh, I, short-sighted, conceited, foolish creature, who could let him dance after my pipe instead of his own! Oh, I, wicked sinner,

who had his life's thread in my hand, and yet should so entangle it!"

But now it was done, and Gunnar was satisfied, because his scruples were not taken up as excuses, but were the feelings of his really upright heart, which wished only to do that which was right, and that which his mother advised, alike indifferent to his own inclination and fancy, which had not taken any particular direction. Gunnar was one of those young men—there are such, and may be found among all classes—who had never felt the omnipotence of a real love; for this reason, that the women finding them so agreeable, fairly fling themselves at their heads instead of letting them seek after and woo them; and Gunnar, like all such, imagined in this way that he could guide his heart according to his own fancy.

There was rather too much of "night and morning" with this old mother and this young son; for the first had already forgotten that people can not put the bit and the bridle upon their feelings, and the latter believed, in his young strength, that people could always do that which they really would, and he had now determined with himself to love Lena. It will soon be seen how he succeeded.

With such thoughts and but few words in connection with the foregoing, the mother and son walked forth in the gray day-break, from the little cottage, which was carefully bolted; but they had not gone far before they heard the jingle of bells, and the quick sound of a horse's feet, and immediately afterward they heard also the cheerful voice of Bengt, who called out to them:

"Look what I come with! Bless me! I thought I should have reached the cottage before you left it, and therefore I have driven so fast. Was it not handsome of the squire? He sent down Magnus this morning to say that I, or some one of the other men, should drive to Guppa in a sledge, and fetch the mother-in-law. Now seat yourself in it, Mother Ingrid, and Gunnar and I will stand in the middle, and then we will go like singing!"

The old woman was quite beside herself for joy at being made so much of, and being conveyed in so comfortable a manner to the hall; and with a sincere heart she blessed Gunnar's master. Gunnar did the same for the sake of his mother, but believed, nevertheless, that which he did believe—namely, that the first impulse to this, like many another good thing, by which

the squire allowed his servants to be benefited, properly came from Ma'nsell Sara.

When they arrived at the hall, Gunnar went into the men-servants' room, and Mother Ingrid was conducted to that of the women-servants. For ourselves, we wish for one moment to take the reader under the arm, and lead him through the lofty and vaulted hall, and up the broad, princely staircase, into another suite of apartments in this grand, old, gray-stone house, which looked in reality much more like a castle than a private residence. We should like to do so, because we have now an opportunity, for the first time, of informing the reader how this property was one of those large old inheritances which the aristocrat of birth found himself compelled by circumstances to give up into the hands of the aristocrat of money, and which now stood like a mausoleum over its former inward and outward splendor, over the knightly spirit and the high-bred manners, which prevailed there in the former time. As the house was in tolerably good condition when the squire came into possession of the whole estate for a mere trifling sum, he did not trouble himself about any needless repair and modernizing, but laid by his money where it could grow up again and bring an abundant harvest—namely, in agriculture, and the management of the land which lay here in a state of great neglect, leaving all ornament and elegance to a future time, which, perhaps, might never come. The squire, although he had received a remarkably good education, had, on the contrary, very little sense of that beauty which seems to be in every thing and every where, and which is very different to the sense of order which again constituted one of his most distinguishing virtues.

From this cause the old walls, gray, and with many a print of the tooth of time upon them, outwardly as well as inwardly, now stood either naked and unadorned as of old, or else clothed with those old hangings, partly of gilt leather, partly of other such-like stuffs of ancient days, as defied time and age, not, to be sure, in their primeval condition, but which, for all that, were quite capable of telling of the taste and customs of former times. Upon these walls grinned here and there horribly staring figures, and with them shepherdesses and beautiful proud ladies, who formerly looked down from them, but who now had a gray and spectral appearance, like all human works upon which time has laid his hands. There was a great deal of damp to be seen in the old house; but, we believe, for our part, that

the many tears which often ran down these naked walls, were wept by the former *lares* and *penates* of the old house, who now saw so very little of that which they had formerly seen; heard no longer the sound of the hunting-horn, and the shivering war-horse stamp and paw on the pavement of the court; or the singers who carried the drinking cup round the company; or beautiful damsels who tripped through the corridors, and bold, proud knights who gladly met them; and love, and merriment, and songs, and musical instruments which formerly sounded within these walls. No; it was all in vain that they now listened for sounds such as these, and wept perhaps many tears over the mischance which allows the sole memory of the grandeur of former days still to remain, and perseveringly stand and tell great lies over the door, namely, the stone shield, well carved with the arms of the Creutz and the Natt-och-Dag family, which the present inhabitants of the house passed daily with indifference, not regarding it otherwise than as a usual door ornament.

At one end of this large house was situated the squire's chamber. He now went there on this morning of Twelfth-day, in dressing-gown and embroidered slippers, smoking-cap, and a large meerschaum, out of which a cloud was circling, and which soon directed its course up to the high vaulted roof, where some horrible personages from the Old Testament laughed scornfully at him. A gloom lay upon the squire's brow, for even he had a sort of conscience, although in certain cases it was not larger than a pea. But a pea even can swell and grow, and break the earth around it, and even the pea-sized conscience of the squire felt itself to-day oppressed and troubled by something. At length, however, he blew forth a cloud of smoke greater than any of the foregoing, and said, or thought—

"Pah! what good can not one do with money, especially among such people."

And with that he went to his bureau, drew out his money drawer, took from it a very handsome sum for the purpose, as it was called formerly, of "laying in the bowl," or "to give on the cake" to the newly-married couple, but which now was to be presented in a most tasteless manner, that is, during the dance with the bride.

This done, the squire was just about to drink his coffee, which stood waiting for him, when by chance he cast a glance

into the court below, just at the moment when young Gunnar arrived, and with a solemn and gloomy countenance conducted his aged mother to the house. The squire drew back hastily, and felt all at once a couple of great talons which were struck into the *little* conscience, heaved a deep sigh out of his chest, which yet did not bring with it any relief; was silent, and mused for a while, and then said, or thought thus to himself:

"Pah! I will give him some cattle at Lady-day, when he will receive or set up his farm."

And now he went up to the cooled coffee, which he drank, and said aloud with an oath, that it did not taste good that day.

CHAPTER X.

IN another end of the same old house dwelt the Squire's elder sister, the old, excellent, Ma'msell Sara. She had already, the day before, arranged every thing perfectly for the approaching great wedding; and therefore it was that she was now rather weary, and was taking a good rest upon this morning of Twelfth-day, in order that she might be all the better able to stand the boisterous solemnities of the day. At half-past eight she arose, however, and rang several times for her maid Lotta; but as she did not come, she did not trouble herself about it, recollecting that Lotta that day had to attend both upon her and Lena. She went, therefore, and busied herself with a number of small things which she had not been able to do the evening before, among which was the arrangement of the bride's chair in the great hall, which ever since the days of old had gone by the name of the "King's Hall," because some one of the former Charleses—people did not then know which—had eaten and been entertained there by the then proprietor.

This was a long piece of work for Ma'msell Sara; the chair was to be covered with rose-colored silk, to stand upon a mat, and upon the chair was to lie a cushion which corresponded to it. All this the old lady prepared upon her knees; but it was now finished, and, with some difficulty, she rose up from the floor, where she had been kneeling. She heaved a deep sigh

and said, or thought, "God give them happiness, comfort, and all good things in mutual love and unity!"

There is something painful and depressing in the thought that the prayers of the good and the righteous can not affect Providence, but that it pursues its own undeviating course, and is called Justice.

When Ma'msell Sara had finished her business she rang again, but this time for Magnus, the servant, who, she thought, would have plenty of time to help her in putting candles into the great chandelier; for since he had struck one candle-glass into a thousand pieces, had cracked another, had broken one pair of candles and let another pair dance down upon the floor, Ma'msell Sara took upon herself this business, although she did not find it very pleasant to mount up, first upon a rickety table, and after that upon a fragile stool, because, while all the walls, windows, doors, and ceilings, spoke loudly and haughtily of the ancient time, so, on the contrary, did all the furniture prattle about a newer time, probably eighteen or twenty years ago, or of exactly that period which was the most tasteless of all for furniture.

The clock struck half-past ten when Ma'msell Sara had finished this and other such small matters; and then throwing her green shawl over her shoulders, and taking her key-basket on her arm, and in her hand a little bundle, in which was something round and bowl-shaped, she betook herself to the lower regions of the household, to see whether every thing was in its proper order, as well as to cast an eye over the wedding-table, and then upon the bride and her adorning. The first place that Ma'msell Sara went into was a large, low, but arched hall, which had been called from the days of old the "guest-room," which name, conformably to old tradition, originated at the time when the house was only one story high, with two low towers; and then this hall was the most elegant state apartment, where strangers were received and entertained, at a long substantial oak table, which was now removed, and placed in one of the highest garrets. Now, however, this room was used at all times; in spring and summer to weave in—weaving being a something in which Ma'msell Sara, like all West Gothland ladies, excelled; in autumn for apples and every kind of fruit and garden apparatus, as well as in winter for all sorts of lumber.

All such things had now been cleared out; the hall well

washed, from the arched ceiling to the stone floor. Twigs of the spruce fir were scattered over all, and as a so-called master bricklayer had "peeped at the chimney," in which fire had not been lighted for this many a long year, they had piled on much fuel, which seemed to produce more smoke than warmth; but Ma'msell Sara consoled herself with the thought that every guest would bring his own stove with him. Here a large table, in the form of a horse-shoe, was spread for sixty people, with beautiful table-cloths, a plate, a knife and fork, and a spoon, for each person; but nothing served. Upon the table there were also ready set every kind of salads for the roast meat; fruit-plates and baskets; rice-cream in a great dish, with preserved whortle-berries on the top, together with huge tarts covered with snow-moss, and pickles, and great dishes with pastry—some in the shape of pyramids, and others erected with artistic hand, and resting in air. Great baskets of cut bread of every variety, and of white bread no lack by any means, stood upon the table likewise, one at every few ells. For the rest, room was left for dishes of enormous size, which should contain meat, pork, bacon, and ox and pig puddings, and roast veal, fish, and cheesecake scattered over with sugar and cinnamon. Here and there stood large pewter dishes, which were to hold substantial cabbages and abundance of peas. As to sugar-basins, wine-bottles, glass, and all other such table finery, they found no room, nor were they there.

There stood upon another table great trays heaped up with ready-cut bread and butter, covered with grated cheese and smoked sausage. There stood also, by dozens, bottles of brandy, with their accompanying glasses and silver bowls, and many other corked and red-sealing-waxed bottles, together with various silver goblets and cups which were to be used for ale.

When Ma'msell Sara had seen all this, and changed and adjusted several things, as well as shaken her head at others, she went *in linea rectâ* to the kitchen. But—incredible! there she found not a single person, excepting an old char-woman, who blew up the fire, and moved about among the many pots.

"What is the meaning of this?" said Ma'msell Sara, with much amazement, and in rather an angry tone, as she entered into the empty kitchen. "Where are all the people gone? Where is the cook? Where is Ma'msell Hallonquist? Why have they not yet lighted the oven?" asked she.

"Why-a," answered the woman, who was stone deaf, and

for that reason not exactly a favorite with Ma'msell Sara, who had a weak voice.

Wrinkling her eyebrows, she cleared her throat, and then screamed out again,

"Where are all the people? Where is ma'msell? Why is not every one in their place in the kitchen?"

"They are not here!" replied the woman, and laughed foolishly.

"Yes, I see that well enough, cat!" exclaimed Ma'msell Sara; "but where *are* they?"

"They are out," returned she.

"Yes, but, good Heavens! *where* are they?" repeated Ma'msell Sara.

"Well, I don't know of a certainty," replied she, laughing all the time; and then adding, in a whispering and sharp tone, "But I fancy they are gone into the housekeeper's room, and are dressing the bride."

"Ah, such a piece of folly!" said Ma'msell Sara, half aloud, and betook herself to the housekeeper's room. When she was come into the very neighborhood of this room, there certainly was no occasion for her to inquire where all the servant-maids were assembled, because such a tremendous chattering was heard there as could scarcely be conceived. But the moment that Ma'msell Sara opened the door, and became visible, all were silent as if they had taken hot porridge into their mouths. All looked taken in, and Ma'msell Sara astonished in the highest degree. She went forward, with slow steps, to the bride, who sat, horribly bedizened, amid a crowd of all the assembled maid-servants, and some strangers into the bargain. Ma'msell Sara surveyed her with a long and severe glance from head to foot, and then said, in a grave and dignified tone—

"I did not expect this of thee, my dear Lena!"

Lena looked down, blushed deeply, but answered not a word.

The cause of Ma'msell Sara's astonishment and anger was the following: Lena had, without asking her advice, or without following the universally-adopted custom of abandoning the bride's-crown when she is known not to be worthy to wear it, allowed herself to be bedizened, not alone with garland and crown, but with the latter of dimensions as large as that which King Pharaoh wears when he, in Hübner's Biblical History, sits and hardens his heart. She had, at the same time, a heap

of flowers, pinchbeck, and finery, on her head, and in her ears, as well as having her hair frizzed into a bunch of disordered curls, which already hung as straight as a nail. For the rest, she had on an old black silk gown, three ells wide, which sat as scantily as a calfskin upon her already very massive figure, and which was too short, both in the body and the skirt, with short old-fashioned puffed-out sleeves, and horribly low in the bosom, which thus remained entirely bare, and was hung about with an incredible number of old pearl necklaces, brass chains, and suchlike trash. A broad crimson riband was tied on for a sash, with huge bows and hanging ends, thus completing the horribly tasteless toilette; and Lena, who otherwise had a very agreeable exterior, looked now like an actual scarecrow.

When Ma'msell Sara saw all this, and with it observed the foolish good-nature of the housekeeper, who had assisted in it—for she had lent Lena the black silk gown, and bedizened her up in this way—it was all she could do to avoid laughter; she succeeded, however, in doing so, and then, turning to this same housekeeper, she addressed her in the following manner, according to the expression always used in Voss's Louise:

"If Ma'msell had not come here, for the first time only in autumn, after the decease of the late lady, and therefore could not know the customs and manners of this family, as well as mine and my brother's wishes in a variety of cases, this childish bedizenment, which, I presume, is ma'msell's work, would greatly anger and astonish me. Now, however, it passes for nothing, but is readily forgiven for the good intention's sake, with the command that ma'msell immediately goes and attends to her duties as kitchen-maid; the dairy-maids to theirs; the poultry-woman to look after her hens; and every one, in one word, to her business, except Lotta, who, perhaps, can help poor Lena out of all this borrowed finery, as well as into her own handsome new black bombazine dress, with which she will wear the new silk handkerchief which she received from her husband; can help her also properly and decently arrange her beautiful hair, and to put it up into a so-called 'chinjong' in the neck, and then to place *this* upon it:" and with that Ma'msell Sara took out of the little bundle which she held in her hand an uncommonly beautiful white silk cap, with its beautiful rose in the neck, as well as a fine and ornamental piece of lace, or a so-called "lin," all which now were greatly admired by the whole assembly, but especially by old Mother

Ingrid, who, frozen and silent, sat in the chimney, and sipped out of a coffee-cup.

"Welcome, my dear Mother Ingrid! I did not see you for all these people," said Ma'msell Sara, and clapped the old and universally-beloved woman kindly on the shoulder.

"Nay, God bless you, ma'msell!" replied Gunnar's mother, and returned the clapping, and then spake still farther:

"Yes," said she, "that is something of a becoming head-ornament for my future daughter-in-law. Nobody can hinder her from wearing *that*, and she will have use out of it as long as it lasts, for, look you, I had this cap of mine when I went for the first time to the Lord's table, and, God be praised! I saved both it and this black camlet dress when the fire went over us, for both of them lay in a chest which Gunnar got out almost at the risk of burning his clothes off him. And see, that cap of Lena's is spin and span new, and so terribly handsome and well-made."

The bride said nothing, and nobody knew in reality what she thought; but certain it is, that when she stood thus dressed, with the handsome new cap upon her glossy black hair, and with her bright complexion and dark eyes, she looked uncommonly well, although a something sharp, a something bold, a certain want of sensibility, lay in her glance and in her whole demeanor. Every body praised the new costume, and every thing now was once more good and beautiful, and full of bridal merriment.

"Gunnar must certainly have made a mistake about the *time*," thought Mother Ingrid silently to herself, as she looked with observing eyes at Lena, and saw the bulky figure of this otherwise smart girl.

CHAPTER XI.

THE time advanced now toward noon. Many of the wedding-guests were already come; and now even the rector and a few other gentry from the neighborhood had arrived. Every body, including the bridegroom, went up to the great hall—every one, with the exception of the bride, who went up by a

back staircase to Ma'msell Sara's room, through the door-chinks of which she was to see the bridegroom in passing, but without being seen by him—an old custom which is never omitted among our West Gothland peasantry, but the particular meaning of which is unknown to the authoress, because the explanations which have been given to her seem so absurd, that she neither comprehends them nor troubles herself to quote them.

Every thing was now ready. The rector stood with gown and book, the clerk had given out the 337th hymn; all the men stood with their hats in their hands; the women with a devotional aspect and heaved sighs. Gunnar, who looked pale, but whose demeanor was manly, stood in the middle of the room, dressed in his simple blue home-spun coat, which was new, smart, and clean, with his hair in the old Swedish fashion parted on the forehead, and falling down each side of his face to the length of half an ell. His was a beautiful head, worthy of the pencil of Södermark, or the crayon of the good Marie Röhl; and the expression, and the feelings which gave that expression life!—they ought to have been painted, and not by me, the unworthy one, but by my beloved Fredrika Bremer.

Mother Ingrid's tears fell fast down her furrowed cheeks, and Ma'msell Sara felt also moisture in her eyes, when she saw the young man who stood there, a living image of a silent, but great and mighty self-sacrifice. But now the squire came leading in Lena, and conducted her to the bride's chair, and such as took the trouble closely to observe him might have very soon remarked that he was deathly pale and trembled. But Lena! she kept her countenance well, and answered her *yes* loudly and distinctly. Gunnar made his response in a deep voice, and that only after a short pause, during which Mother Ingrid began to tremble, because once in her youth—not she herself, but a friend of one of her friends, was present, when the bridegroom said bluntly No, just when he ought to have said Yes. Her son, however, did not do so; the pure, holy angel of truth pronounced with him his audible *yes*, but wept assuredly, because close beside the white-winged one, stood the black demon of falsehood, and whispered his base, cowardly Yes into the other ear. There stood they—Gunnar and Lena—like bright day and dark night, and their poor life became twilight.

When the marriage ceremony was over, the clergyman made

a short address to the new wedded pair; and almost every one thought they remarked that he spoke indulgently to the young married man, but somewhat severely to Lena. She cast her eyes down; her countenance was gloomy, and so was the expression of her glance.

After this the wedded couple were conducted to the sofa, and a tremendous wishing of good luck commenced. The first who offered their congratulations were the Squire, Ma'msell Sara, and Mother Ingrid. The Squire seemed not to know what he should properly fix his eyes upon, when he wished the new-married pair happiness, and by chance he just hit upon a piece of the old tapestry, which represented Satan tempting a human being. Mother Ingrid burst into tears, and Ma'msell Sara looked solemnly thoughtful, then mild and cordial as she took Gunnar's hand, and again a little gloomy as she offered hers to Lena.

Gunnar's thoughts during this time were as if they were benumbed, but they seemed to be suddenly aroused into life; when next after the three first congratulations, a young, unknown girl stepped forward, well dressed as a peasant maiden, but in the highest degree neat and elegant, although not properly in the costume of that part of the country. There were in her two large, oval, clear, blue eyes, two large round tears, as she heartily embraced Lena, and at the same time bashfully extended her warm hand to Gunnar. The girl herself looked as warm and excited as if she had just been dancing; a bright and clear crimson colored the beautiful round cheeks, which contrasted strongly with every one that was near her, who looked red-nosed and blue with the cold, because although for many days there had been fires in the great "king's hall," yet it was impossible to produce more than from eight to ten degrees of heat. The *lares* and *penates* wept through the whole day floods of tears, which ran down from the walls or else in deep window-niches, because they had from their hidden corners seen so many weddings, but seldom or never so much guile and deceit; seldom any thing which was so adverse; any thing which was so contrary to the feelings as was this farce.

If the moment had not been so solemn, Gunnar would have inquired who the young girl was, but now he thought that he could not do it, and the girl soon vanished in the crowd, and Gunnar forgot her, or rather thought no more about her.

And now came the hour of dinner, so much desired by so

many; and all the wedding guests betook themselves down into the "guest-room," from which the odor of eatables came perfuming the whole way. It took a long time before every body found a place, and they who had to arrange the guests bawled themselves hoarse with saying, "Be so good!—Be so good and step forward!" And things did not get at all in order, until they began almost to drag some of the guests forward by the arms, and gently to push some others in the back. At length they were all seated; the clergyman beside the bride, and Mother Ingrid beside her son. These four were quite silent in the beginning; every body else both ate and talked softly, yet for all that there was a terrible noise, with the stamping upon the stone floor of the whole number of servant-maids in the family, while some strangers likewise, who were running about and making as much noise as possible, obstructed the attendants. At last the minister began to say a friendly word to the bride, and the bride boldly and freely struck up a conversation with the minister. With that Mother Ingrid took occasion softly to clap Gunnar upon the arm, saying,

"How art thou, my little Gunnar; thou lookest so pale?"

"Oh, yes," replied Gunnar, "I am very well, only a little out of sorts in my head. But, dearest mother, who is that young strange lass who sits there opposite, and nods so kindly to Lena, and casts down her eyes so prettily; I scarcely ever saw the like?"

"Bless me!" answered Mother Ingrid, "do you not know her? It is Lena's sister—your new sister-in-law. She is named Elin, and only got here a little while ago, long after the bride was dressed and all. The horse was knocked up by the way, so that she had to walk the last seven miles, and therefore she looks so warm."

Lena, who heard this, and who wished much to have some talk with Gunnar, joined in the conversation, and said,

"Oh, bless me! in all the days of my life! is it possible that you did not know my sister Elin? I remember now, that you were just then away when she was here for a short time, two years ago. She has come quite punctually to the wedding day, though at the very last minute. Mother, who lives a long way up, in Wassbo, has been poorly; so Elin could not find in her heart to set off before yesterday morning, for now she is better; but she does not think she ought to stop here longer than the day after-to-morrow. Do you think her like me?"

"Oh no, Heaven forbid!—not in the least! She is so very much younger than you are; and, besides, so merry and kind, and—and it seems to me as if you were not sisters," said Gunnar; and in Gunnar's answer it may be plainly seen that he had not been into the school of the great world, but merely in that of truthfulness and integrity.

"Yes, look you; the reason for our being so unlike," returned Lena, "is in this way. I favor father, and am dark, and she favors mother, who was always fair, like her; for all that, many people say that I am like her."

And now the bride called to Elin across the table, and every body was silent, to listen when the bride spoke.

"Bless me, Elin! Gunnar did not know thee! I did not remember that," said Lena cheerfully. Elin, however, blushed, and looked quite abashed, and Gunnar did just the same. Besides this, Lena's remark was made to Elin at the very moment when she was trying to avoid laughing at a good peasant woman, who sat close beside her at the table, and who, having managed with some difficulty, to cut her meat upon the plate with her knife and fork, laid them down as soon as that was done, and ate with her fingers. Elin had learned from her mother, who was brought up in a gentleman's family, and who had served in it till her marriage, and who now lived in a large church-town, a little more of the habits of civilized life than is found among the rural peasantry; besides this, as she did nothing but sit in the house and spin, weave, wash and get up the neighbors' fine caps, by which means her mother maintained herself, she therefore escaped a deal of the customary peasant habits, without being contaminated in any way by the vices and follies of city maidens. In her, there was a something simple and agreeable, which could not be called by any other name than that of good nature; and that, without doubt, is the most glorious gift which a woman can receive from the great Father of all.

Gunnar, as we know, drank no longer brandy, excepting now and then, when he was seduced to do so. He had not taken any abstinent pledge, but adhered to this system of temperance from pure conviction, because brandy, and the temper that it occasioned, were not attractive to Gunnar.

In the mean time, Ma'msell Sara knew that on this day he would not taste a drop of it, and for that reason she caused the strong and fragrant ale to circulate so much the more in-

dustriously. Some of the less costly sorts of wine, also, were from time to time carried round; and when it came to the drinking of healths, two large bowls of punch and bishop were brought in. One would not be answerable for the rum coming from Batavia, or the red wine from Bordeaux; but the mixture of all the ingredients was most delicious to those whose taste was not spoiled; and it became a stimulus which, for the first time in many weeks; had the power of diverting, in some degree, the heart of the young bridegroom; and when the guests, after having sat for several hours at the table, rose up, he was no longer the pale gloomy Gunnar, who was lost in strange thought, but the young man of former times, the gay, merry, life-enjoying Gunnar, with blooming cheeks and flashing eyes. But those eyes, the truest interpreters of the children of nature, sought only for one single object, and when it was found, they rested calmly and joyfully upon it, forgetting *everything* else.

The whole of the wedding company were soon requested to go up again into the large "king's hall," where now the chandelier and the old fashioned lamps were lighted; those old-fashioned lamps, set in mirrors, almost the only pieces of movable furniture which had not been taken away when the place passed from hand to hand, and which were still attached, as in former days, to those old walls which they had reflected so many hundred years, though now darkly and gloomily, because the glass and the silvering were rather black than white.

Here they drank coffee, and here began general gayety and merriment, which soon became noisy enough; the peasant women grew talkative and excited, and the young fellows so ill-mannered toward every one, that Ma'msell Sara thought it high time to let the violins play, that a vigorous polska and the dancing might begin. That was soon arranged. All those who found themselves unstable in the legs, and who were the most noisy, betook themselves quietly down to the laboring men's apartment, or to the servants' hall; and those, again, who were somewhat more moderate in the use of the excellent punch, made up for their short-comings by an immoderate dance; and now nothing was heard but "Hurrah! Hurrah! Go on better! Hurrah! Let it now go as long as things will hold together," etc. etc.

And look at Bengt, the gay, lively Bengt! he was the first, and he was the last in the polska; and—which looked well—the bridegroom was not much behind him.

"My word! that was a glorious polska! I never in all my time went through a better one!" said Gunnar, after a vehement dance, wiping his brow with the huge "bridegroom's kerchief," a gift from Ma'msell Sara; and then setting down his partner in the middle of the floor, who was quite unconscious, where she was, did as our lieutenants, chamberlains, royal secretaries, and many more can do, were it even through eight or ten rooms—dragged her off again, and placed her in the very same spot where he had brought her from. And for all that, ye lieutenants, secretaries, and squires! how many among you dance with any of our finical, ornamented, accomplished, and laced-up young ladies of the higher or middle ranks, with any thing like the spirit and youthful joy with which Gunnar danced with his young sister-in-law, Elin?

Very soon after this dance, and after the ale and punch had again briskly circulated, and when Gunnar was in such a state of animation and excitement as he had never been before, yet without being in the least degree what might be called intoxicated, it so happened that Elin and some other of the young wedding guests found themselves in one of the large, deep recesses of the windows in the great hall. Elin and the young girls were sitting, and Bengt and several other young fellows were standing before them, while Gunnar, who was taller than all the rest, leaned upon Bengt's shoulder, and talked with the girls.

"Ah, what a merry scene this is!" said the stranger girl; "we are sitting altogether as if in a little room of our own. I never saw such a queer house as this! I am both frightened and pleased when I come into it."

"Yes," replied Gunnar, "it would not be easy to find its fellow; and I say as you do, Elin dear; there is *something* which one feels, both good and bad, when one goes about in all these lofty rooms, and staircases, and passages, and hiding-places. I feel so strange at times—there goes quite a sudden thrill through me; but, for all that, it is very pleasant!"

"Oh, that was a lie!" said Still-man Olle, who had just then joined the group. What little bit of sense Olle had he had drowned in pure, good brandy, and he now was going about to pick a quarrel, were it even with the bridegroom, toward whom, as we know, he had no very friendly feelings. "It was a downright lie, that you liked it," continued he, turning to Gunnar, "but you are one of Satan's cowards and dastards,

and, therefore, you are afraid of both goblins and 'ghosts, and such-like stuff; but look at *me*! I, on the contrary—"

"Yes, that is very well for you to say," answered Bengt, laughing. "It is good for us folks at the Hall not to remember any thing when we have to go in an evening up to the squire's loft and the count's chamber, in the southern tower there."

"Ah, how was that?" asked Elin, whose curiosity was excited in the highest degree by this conversation.

"Oh, yes, I'll tell you about that," whispered Gunnar in her ear, "as soon as Olle goes his way; but it is not worth while to begin about it while he stays, for he is now so fuddled that he does not know at all what he says."

Gunnar did not answer Olle, but asked Elin whether she had been all over this old goblin-nest."

"No, Heaven defend me! certainly not!" replied Elin. "I never was here but once before, and then I was only in the women-servants' room, and in the kitchen."

"Ah, that is charming!" exclaimed Gunnar; "then I will some day go about every where with you, for nobody knows better than I do every secret place, hole, and corner! For, you see, I have so often had to go about every where with Ma'msell Sara, when she wanted things putting to rights—repaired, or so."

"But I am sorry to say," answered Elin, rather mournfully, "I have not, indeed, many days to spend here; for I must set off home again, at farthest, the day after to-morrow."

"Ah, that is a great pity!" exclaimed Gunnar, anew, and his young, handsome, and but the moment before, so gay and animated countenance looked now quite tragic.

"But one might really go and see it to-morrow," remarked Bengt.

"Ah, yes, that can be done very well, and we will do it too; or what say you, dear Elin?" asked Gunnar, kindly, but not gayly.

"Nay, nay, look ye; there is no joking in that, as there can't be when he troubles himself so about the sister-in-law setting off back again. Ha! ha! ha!" screamed and laughed Olle. "Nay, nay, Gunnar will, maybe, keep her all his life," continued he, stupidly impudent, and at the same time in loud and derisive tone. "Perhaps he will make an exchange! Ha! ha! ha! Exchange our old, black Lena for that beautiful

young thing that sits there in the corner. Ha! ha! ha! Come here with thee, thou little lass, so that I may have a good look at thee, and give thee a kiss!"

And with that Olle crushed himself into the midst of them, who tried to keep him back, and succeeded in catching hold of Elin by the arm.

"The devil take you!" said Gunnar, in a whisper in Olle's ear, and at the same time so emphatically, that he sneaked out of the circle, and went his way.

"That was an unmannerly fellow!" said Elin, and put in order her delicate little shawl, which Olle's rude hand had disarranged.

"Ah, he is a regular wretch!" said another of the young girls.

"Yes, a perfect monster!" added a third.

Gunnar merely looked after Olle, and exchanged a glance with Bengt, as well as a few words, of which only these were audible, "Ah, I think you need not trouble yourself about him;" and these words were said by Bengt to Gunnar.

"No," said Elin, who, with the quickness of invention usual to women, sought now to divert the storm from the mind of the men. "Now I shall get to know all that story of the count's chamber in the southern tower, and why it was called so. I knew nothing about it except the name only: 'The count's chamber in the southern tower' sounds like something spectral. I don't at all believe, however, that I should see any thing, though I were alone in the dark, even at this Grantorp."

The others laughed.

"Yes, you will have to believe that there is nothing to make fun of," said Bengt; "but now Gunnar shall begin and tell us—for he knows it best—about the legend of the 'count's chamber,' and the 'loft,' and after that the history of one particular evening when Olle was in a pretty stew!"

"Ah, yes, dear Gunnar! tell us about that," said Elin and the other girls.

"Ay," said Gunnar, and drew in a chair, upon which he seated himself just before Elin, "ay, as to the count's chamber in the southern tower, that has to do with the manners of ancient days! Many, many years ago, there lived a count here who owned the whole demesne, and because of this count, perhaps, it is that it is called 'the count's demesne' by many old people; and this count was a horribly wicked man, both to-

ward his people and his wife. He seldom went away from home, and governed them like a Turk; but the countess, on the contrary, was the regular image of an angel, so good and compassionate, and so wonderfully beautiful, and therefore the count was jealous of all the menfolk that were about, and even of his own squire. And now it so happened that the count had to set out on a journey which would keep him away for several days, but just as he was about to cross the courtyard, with his squire beside him, his horse made such a devilish plunge, that the squire was thrown to the ground, and his arm was broken; and in the morning I will show you, Elin dear, where it was, because the stone stands there yet against which he broke his arm, and it is called to this day 'the squire's stone.' It has never been taken away, and it never can be, for they say that it goes nearly through the whole earth, just exactly as a good or a bad conscience goes through a man. But look you, now! the wicked count did not believe that the squire had broken his arm, for there was nothing at all to be seen there. The count, however, made pretence that he believed it, and took another squire with him, and went on his journey, and kissed his young wife when he set off; and I will show you in the morning, Elin dear, where she stood, for it was upon a stone which is to this day called the 'countess's stone;' and all young ladies and women of rank were accustomed at that time to mount upon it when they rode out on horseback.

"But now it was true that the squire had really broken his arm, and broken it very badly, and there was no doctor at hand to be had; but in the evening, when the squire's pains were very great, the countess, who was the best woman in the world, went up to his loft—and that you will, perhaps, see in the morning, Elin dear—where he lay high up under the roof. When the countess came up, the youth lay upon his bed, and she knelt down beside it, that she might bind up his arm with spices, and other healing means. But just as she was doing so—but it is a dreadful history, you must know—she heard heavy footsteps coming up the stairs, and as she knew that she was doing no wrong, she still continued on her knees, as she was, when—the count came through the doorway! And then, my friends, then he would not allow himself any time to hear the truth, but, puff! puff! he shot his wife with the one pistol, and the squire with the other; and so they both lay, and swam in their blood, with their heads together, and as if they had kissed

each other. And there, in the loft, one sees the marks of the shot and the blood, which stuck to the wall; and those spots are called 'the kiss of death.'

"But now, look you, here comes the most remarkable part; just in the same moment when the count shot his wife and his young squire, repentance came over him; and when he learned from all his household how innocent the young death-sufferer was, then his remorse grew day by day, and he had no rest; but he traveled, first of all, as far as Jerusalem, to the grave of the Redeemer, and there he lamented his sin. He then came back, and never again was wicked, or cruel, or passionate, but pious as a lamb; and never once went out, but fastened up all these grand rooms, and lived himself, both night and day, up in the count's chamber in the southern tower, and that is the reason why the room is so called; and one can see very well, on the floor, how he walked up and down, from one corner to another, in his great and terrible repentance."

When Gunnar had ended, all remained silent, petrified with horror.

"Ha! that is a dreadful story," said Elin, at length; "and he was a terribly wicked gentleman who could act in that way to a virtuous wife."

"True," said Gunnar, after a little silence. "But, do you know, Elin dear, I have often and often thought about the business, and tried to put myself in the count's place; and, do you know, my friends, that I for my part can not so entirely blame him, for, do you know what—if one loved one's wife as much as he seemed to do" (and with this Gunnar heaved a deep and undissembled sigh), "and if he then doubted her, and then afterward found her beside the squire's bed! Yes, God knows what a poor wretch might do! and God be thanked for every day when one is not so tempted of the devil!"

"Yes, indeed; but—" sighed Elin, "but," added she after a short silence, "as we thanked Gunnar for this pleasant story, let us now know all about that evening of which you spoke."

"Ay, that was masterly," said Bengt, laughing; "now tell us about it, Gunnar."

"Yes," began Gunnar, "and, first of all, you must know that many people believe that both the count, and the countess, and the squire, and perhaps many more, haunt this old owlet's nest; and—God knows best whether one should believe so! I myself have never exactly seen any thing, but still I would not swear

that there is nothing to be seen, for all that. But as to that, let it be as it may; every body, be they better or be they worse, takes good care neither to go up into the loft, nor into the count's chamber in the southern tower; and there has been many a one here at the hall, who, for many and many a year, never at any time have put their noses in there, because they are well barred and bolted, and Ma'msell Sara keeps the keys in her own hands. Thus, at least, was it with me, for I had been here five whole years without having ever done more than peep through the keyhole one Sunday when the gentlefolks were out. However, about two years ago, when there was such an unmanageable quantity of fruit on all the trees, I had to help the gardener to carry up the apples one Saturday afternoon. Ma'msell Sara and the lasses, they spread them out, and I carried them up. But then, when the guest-room (where we ate our dinner) was as full as it would hold, Ma'msell Sara got into a trouble to know where she should ever put the rest. But, my troth! what did I do then but stand to it, that they could very well put all the rest of the fruit up in the loft, or else in the count's chamber, for, look you, I was determined that *there* I would go. But you should have seen what eyes I had brought on myself!

"The lasses looked as if they were frightened out of their senses; and Ma'msell Sara stared at me just as if she had said, 'And would you dare to do so in an evening!' But, look you, I dared to do it! But the gardener, you see, he is old, and an old crock into the bargain," (added Gunnar, in a low voice, because the gardener and his whole family were among the wedding guests), "he was determined that he would not go, and none of the girls would, and so there I had to go down into the men-servants' room to get some help, but I found nobody there but Olle. Look you, however, when he knew what business was going on, and *where* he should have to go, he said directly that he had got such a dreadful headache he could not move from the spot. I laughed at him to his face, but he stuck to it, and with that story I was forced to go back and to carry up all the fruit by myself, for nobody but Ma'msell Sara and I undertook the business; and Heaven knows I did not hurry myself at all up there, for I wished to look well about me every where, when I had once got in. At last Ma'msell Sara laughed, and said that I must make haste, for she was so cold. But I fancy," added he, in a lower voice, "that our good ma'msell was a

little bit afraid, for it was almost pitch dark when we came down.

"In the evening, when I went into the men-servants' room, we fellows talked about it, and Bengt was quite mad that he had not been with us; but look you, Olle, who always gets out of the way of danger, began to insult me, and said that I now talked so courageously and boldly, but that he knew precisely that I had been as frightened as a hare, and trembled in every joint, and that I had held by Ma'msell Sara's skirts; and God knows what stupidity besides he did not utter. And at last, when I got angry and threatened him with a stick, he then was silent for a while; but when he saw that I was in good humor again, he began once more, and at last defied me, for a whole measure of brandy, late, and dark, and dismal as it was, to go up alone, either to the loft or to the count's chamber; and, only think! both Lars and Overseer Anders held with him. Now, however, I was no longer angry, but hurt; because I never was angry with Anders, for he is a devilish good and clever fellow, nor with Lars either, for he is as stupid as a sow; but I was hurt at them, and I now was determined to show them what I dared and what I dared not do, and that without a drop, much more a measure of brandy; so therefore I took all three, Anders, and Lars, and Olle, with me, and Bengt followed for company's sake, and we all of us went up to speak with Ma'msell Sara, and I prayed her as civilly as I could to give me the key; that I might sleep up there the whole night; and I assured her on my conscience that I would not eat a single pear or apple, nor touch any thing else. Bengt remembers what was her answer:

"'No, Gunnar,' said she, 'you shall not do that. That you have courage and spirit to go up there, is plain enough by your begging so earnestly for it, but I have reasons of my own which determine me *never* to let this key go out of my hands, let it be to whomever it may, and I will never go from my determination.'

"I cannot deny but that I became nervous, when she said so: indeed, such a wise and excellent person as she is has her sufficient reasons, although she may keep them concealed. After that, not one of the fellows said a word, except Olle, who said that I was very glad to have escaped! Did one ever hear such a thing?" continued Gunnar after a little silence.

His auditors were silent, dejected, and amazed.

But now Olle came staggering back to them, and exclaimed in a loud voice,

"What in all the world! You are sitting here yet, you Gunnar, and making a fuss with your sister-in-law! I shall go and tell that to your old Lena, ha! ha! ha! Yes, that I shall do on the spot! ha! ha! ha!"

"Ah, thou art one of the devil's lubbers, and shalt hold thy peace!" said Gunnar, half aloud, and ground his teeth. With that he rose from his seat and walked across the room, and went up to Lena, to whom he spoke some kind words—impelled by, God knows best what sort of feeling.

When he left Lena, his mother pulled him by the coat, and, kindly nodding to him, said,

"You are soon going away, dear lad! You must always love and respect your wife, for then it will at all times go well with you."

Gunnar, pleased by his mother's approbation, nodded to her in return, and all the *lares* and the *penates* smiled at the genuine affection which filled these hastily exchanged glances. They smiled for joy, we say, because the *lares* and the *penates* are certainly all of them good, and they rejoice at the virtues of the good.

But now the time was come when people were to *dance with the bride*, because all those who had taken a drop too much were now come to themselves again.

This dance is conducted thus: All and each of the wedding-guests dance a turn or two with the bride, press her hand significantly, and give with this pressure the so-called "dance-money," be it more or less, according to every one's various means and opportunity. The bride makes a short bow or nod of acknowledgment, and gives that which she has received to some one else, who places it upon a tray or plate held for the purpose.

The squire began the dance. There was a something dull and strange about it. He did not properly go round with her, but the letter which he placed in Lena's hand, and which little Elin afterward received upon a silver waiter, was large, and contained gold. Ma'msell Sara did not give very much; these were her thoughts: "If they need any thing more in the time to come, I would rather give it to Gunnar."

The young gentlemen of the house had each received his ten-dollar bank-note from papa, but little Janne had already

lost his, and cried dreadfully, and then he found it again; and all this he told to Lena during the dance, because Lena had waited upon the tutor and the boys, and was a tolerable favorite with the latter. Mother Ingrid gave a silver three-dollar piece, which she had kept ever since she was young. The tutor went out of the way to avoid dancing with Lena, but laid his mite at once upon the waiter which Elin held.

Olle nearly threw down the bride, that he might give her a dirty, tattered twelve-penny note, so unstable was he on his legs. But when Bengt came with his new twenty-five-penny piece, what a dance there was! He swung Lena round at such a rate, that in a moment she was three-quarters round the room; and when he swung her past Olle, who stood leaning against a wall, not far from Gunnar, Olle exclaimed,

"No, no, you Bengt! no, no; go moderately! Use the bride gingerly, else how is she to get through all the bridal business? ha, ha, ha! Look at old Lena! how she scampers and goes! ha, ha, ha!"

"Be silent, you dog! If you can not keep your mouth shut, trouble may come of it: that I promise you!" whispered Gunnar, and cast, at the same time, such a glance at him, as sent him off, crest-fallen and staggering, to another corner of the room, where there stood a wooden can of ale.

Just then Elin came up with her waiter, and as Lena was dancing she stood beside Gunnar.

"That is too heavy for you, dear Elin," said he, with a certain kind of peasant politeness.

"Oh, nonsense!" replied Elin; "it is hardly any weight. I should not care if the tray were ever so heavy; but, as for me, poor creature," added she, in an under voice, and cast down her eyes so beautifully, "I have nothing to put upon it for my own part; I have not as much money as I would willingly give to you, and nothing to offer if I danced with Lena, unless I should, some time hence, give you something that you may like."

"Oh, indeed!" replied Gunnar, with all that politeness which, with the child of nature, comes direct from the heart; "I think you would do enough, little Elin, if you would hem the fine bride's-handkerchief for Lena, and make me a nightcap; then I should forget all my lifetime that I must some day be wrapped in a shroud."

"Hush! how you are talking!" said Elin, and looked up into the dark-blue eyes of her new brother.

But at length this disagreeable offering-dance came to an end, and the tidings arrived that supper was ready for the whole bridal company. And now nobody must by any means imagine to themselves that it was a *société comme il faut*, who quietly betook themselves by two and two down the stairs to the supper-room. No, heaven forbid! Here all, and each one for himself, rushed shrieking, crowding, pushing, thrusting, down the stone stairs; and the voice of Olle was heard unceasingly bawling one fragment of an old song after another; and when he saw Elin going down the stairs by the side of Gunnar, he shouted at the top of his voice,

"Yes, indeed, Gunnar! now you can sing the song you love best—

'Elin is my sugar deary;
Lena is my coal-black sow;
Elin is my bell so cheery;
Lena is my milking cow!'

Ha, ha, ha! Is not thy song in that way? I fancy I can remember something like that. Ha, ha, ha!"

"How willingly would I teach him to keep his mouth shut, if I were only near enough!" said Gunnar between his teeth; but Elin, who heard what he said, answered him gently.

"Oh, Gunnar," she said, "you should not vex yourself about him; he is really quite drunk."

When the whole of this excited wedding-company had reached the so-called guest-room, which again served for their eating-hall, there was seen another essential difference between this assembly and one of the same kind among educated people, because, instead of gentlemen who drew in each his chair, each one with his lady, in the midst of incessant conversation and courtesies, there occurred here, among this noisy and half-drunken company, some minutes of perfect silence and tranquillity. Every one stood with folded arms and bowed head—the grace before meat was said; they thanked God for the food which they were about to receive, while we, "educated people," scarcely allow ourselves time for thanks for that which we have already received; probably because we seldom reflect how difficult it is to get, and how impossible, unless God assist us. "*Voilà la différence.*"

But now the wedding-day was ended. It is true that they danced for an hour after supper; but the dance did not take its proper circuit, or, rather, it was quite too circuitous; for,

as the heads of the dancing cavaliers were much heavier than usual with the good ale, punch, and brandy, and the feet of the ladies varied so much from the true course, with the good fare of which they had partaken, all were glad to make the best of their way home, and sink into the embrace of Morpheus.

It was late before Gunnar slept, and then he dreamed that he was conducting Elin up to the squire's loft, and that they two stood together and contemplated "the kiss of death" upon the wall. He awoke.

"Yes, that may become true!" exclaimed he, as he awoke, and lay and thought about how, on the coming morrow, he should go up and thank the gentlefolks for all the great trouble and expense they had been at, and, at the same time, beg so urgently from Ma'msell Sara that Elin might have a peep into the squire's loft and the count's chamber, just to gratify her, because she was only going to stay over the day—which, to the great delight of every one, was Sunday, so that Christmas seemed to be a little extended. Gunnar could not sleep, but lay awake, and thought upon Elin! And we, we happen just now to think, why is it that people so frequently see great and terrible crimes committed among persons of the lower and uneducated classes, and so very seldom in the higher—where, again, small failings, vices under a thousand dissimilar forms, in part reveal themselves, in part hide in darkness, under the mask of dissimulation? May not the cause of this difference be sought for, and found, in the self-knowledge, which is a consequence of all cultivation, all study, all intuitive observation of the world, and all its manifestations? People learn to know other men and other relationships, and, at the same time, to know themselves, and those who belong to them. Hence it is that we are on the look-out and watch over ourselves; that we consider, in the first place, what may be; that we set up defenses, and the palisades of experience, against the strong and powerfully insinuating passions, which appear large and apparent, like the lions and leopards of the woods, while the lesser failings are allowed to steal in unawares, without any opposition, like guileful vipers thronging in upon us from all sides. We educated people are thus at all times prepared for every thing which may occur. Whatever happens to us we have read of beforehand, heard of, seen examples of, and we know already how we should, ought, *must* conduct ourselves.

The uneducated man, on the other side, who has never beforehand considered a similar case to his own, rushes on to meet it merely in the way in which passion and instinct prompt him, and never guards himself from approaching the abyss of crime, merely because he does not see it, unless it should lie like a pitfall before him.

Gunnar thought upon Elin, and did not believe that in so doing he did any thing wrong. He did not, indeed, think of her in order to obtain her as his own, but merely of how good she looked—how smart and neat was her figure in the dance—how beautifully she talked—how cordially she seemed attached to her sister Lena—how full of affection in speaking of her mother—how gentle and polite toward the other girls—and how painful it was that she must so soon return home. Gunnar did not believe that he did wrong by these thoughts. On the contrary, he regarded them as good, and agreeable to God, and assuredly felt no regret on their account. But ah! how would one of us have acted? I know how, but I can scarcely explain it. Among a hundred, one might, perhaps, have driven away the thought as dangerous, and the others have retained it, with a mingled enjoyment and a bitter regret, thinking on the difference between the two sisters, and not having clearly ascertained in what direction the heart was going, and precisely by that means being enabled to lay the reins upon it.

Gunnar, however, did neither; he merely thought on Elin, and luxuriated in these thoughts.

CHAPTER XII.

WHEN at length the morning came, both Gunnar and Lena went up-stairs to the gentlefolks and thanked them.

The squire said, but without looking up, "You are very welcome to all; it is nothing to return thanks for."

"Yes, to be sure," replied Lena, pertly, and taking the lead in the conversation.

Ma'msell Sara took the new-married couple by the hand, wished them much happiness, and then made a little appropriate speech to them, to which Gunnar listened, weighing

deeply every word, but with an unchanging countenance. Lena, on the contrary, shed torrents of tears, which she wiped away with the corner of her neckerchief—but without hearing or thinking about a single word.

The Squire stole away during this address; and this allowed Gunnar to act upon his resolve of begging just to have a peep into the loft to gratify little Elin.

"Oh, yes, willingly, my child, replied Ma'msell Sara, with a little smile. "Your sister Elin," continued she, turning to Lena, "is, I think, such an agreeable and well-behaved girl, that I will gladly give my permission for this, if it will gratify her. Go, therefore, down, and ask her to come up now, that I may go with you; I have some little matters to arrange up there."

And with that she took her green woolen shawl, and sought out the great rusty keys, while Lena went down for Elin. Elin, however, made her appearance alone; and they could not help remarking that Lena remained below.

"So you are, then, curious about the squire's loft, and the count's chamber, dear child?" said Ma'msell Sara to Elin, in a kindly and jocular tone, while they three were going up the many and steep stairs.

"Ah, yes," said Elin, feeling really ashamed that the polite ma'msell should take such a deal of trouble on her account. "Ah, yes, it is Gunnar's fault, who set me all agog about that old loft and the chamber; for I never have seen such a one before."

They were now come up to the loft, the door of which Ma'msell Sara opened; but instead of entering herself, she went into a garret to look at the old fur covering of a sledge, to see whether it was moth-eaten or not. Gunnar and Elin went, therefore, alone into the so-called squire's loft. The winter morning was cloudy and gray, and the daylight came scantily in through a small window high up in the wall, the little panes of which rattled to the keen north wind in their crazy leaden fastening.

"Ha!" said Elin, and crept involuntarily to Gunnar's side.

"You are cold, Elin, dear," said Gunnar, and wrapped around her the skirt of his new blue homespun coat; but Elin drew herself aside, and said—

"Oh, no! I really am not cold, but it is so mysterious and dismal, just like the inside of a church."

"Perhaps you would like to go away?" inquired Gunnar.

"Oh, no!" replied Elin; "I really must look at the horrible stains."

Gunnar conducted her, silently and softly, to a gloomy corner of the room, and when there, he said, taking hold of her by the arm—

"Look here, Elin, dear; here stood the bed; there lay the young squire, and there bent the countess upon her knee, and"—with this he pointed with Elin's hand—"there, upon the wall, do you see?—the kiss of death!"

Elin crept nearer to Gunnar, and they stood silently for a long time, with their eyes riveted upon the stains of blood, nearly obliterated by age, which tradition insisted upon were the united blood of the young squire and his lady.

"Do you know, Elin," said Gunnar, after a long silence, "do you know, I have seen this before without exactly thinking so much about it; but now! do you know what comes into my mind? Ay, perhaps it is an unchristian thought! Do you believe, Elin, that it could be possible that she, the countess, did, after all, love him, the squire? Do you believe it? Tell me, Elin, do you think that she could be so wicked—in heart, though, for nobody could observe it, or insist upon its being true? What do you think about the matter, dear Elin?"

"Oh, I do not know exactly what to believe," answered Elin, who had become quite sad. "I never would willingly believe evil of any body; and it would, indeed, be a horrible sin for any one to love another instead of their own married partner."

"Yea, certainly, it would be so," replied Gunnar, sighing deeply, and letting go Elin's arm, which he had hitherto held close to his heart.

But now came in Ma'msell Sara, who looked rather cloudy, like every thing else, this winter morning; for, although she had not found a single moth in the fur, she had found three or four rat-holes.

"Well, my child," said she, "you have studied perfectly the whole of the squire's loft, I hope!"

After, therefore, the most hasty glance into the count's chamber, they went down into the more inhabited portions of the house.

This day put an end to all the business of the wedding. Elin returned home. Gunnar sighed deeply when he saw the

last glimpse of her vehicle; thought incessantly upon her, and again returned to his daily work. Lena did the same; but she no longer took as much pains as formerly with her toilet, nor yet to conceal her situation, which every body remarked, excepting Gunnar, who seldom looked at Lena, and who saw as little of her as he could, although he always was kind and friendly toward her.

Time went on in this way to the third winter month, and March came with long, light days, but cold and harsh, just like people in good circumstances who are totally free from passion.

CHAPTER XIII.

"I SHOULD very much like to go to the fair to buy myself a cow and a couple of oxen," said Gunnar to the squire, on one of the first days in March.

"You need not do that," replied his master, without looking him in the face, and pushing his stick desperately in the ground at the same time, as if he wanted to see how far it would go; "you—you shall have the cattle from me at your first setting up; afterward you—but no-need to talk about that."

Gunnar was really very glad of this gift. He had no love for Lena; he did not long for the time when he should pass his days alone with her; but still he longed, like every one else who has passed his twentieth year, to see the smoke ascend from his own hearth, to sleep under his own roof, and to eat of his own food; in a word, to settle himself, and to be, at least, master within the bounds of his own home. To make this home as comfortable and as excellent as possible was Gunnar's wish—as, indeed, it is the wish of every other person in his, or in far better circumstances. All the money which remained after the purchase of the cattle just mentioned, the means for which was the sum which came in at the wedding, and the unpaid wages of Lena and Gunnar, was to be appropriated to the purchase of plenishing for the house; and now Gunnar was enabled to add the sum which the cattle would have cost to the other, which would thus provide them with many more comforts than he had hoped for at the beginning. This really filled

Gunnar's heart with a youthful gladness; and in the evening he said to his companions in the men-servants' room—

"The squire is, after all, upon the whole, a good and honorable gentleman, although I never before could get that notion into my head, nor even bear him."

"And I *never* shall bear him," replied Bengt; "for he is a false and cunning fellow; never looks folks rightly in the face; says one thing and means another; and, according to my opinion, never does any thing for nothing; and some fine day, as true as I am speaking, he'll have his payment for the cattle, and will get it out of you by hard dealings: that you'll come to see, if you only live long enough. But as to ma'msell, she is good."

"Yes, yes, I'd have you think whether I shan't tell the squire what you have been saying about him," said Olle, with a malicious and hateful laugh.

"Yes, I shall trust you for doing that," replied Bengt, "for you have a red head, like the squire himself; and, hark ye! I never trust any body upon whose head our Lord has put a fox-skin cap."

"Nay, ugly they are," said Gunnar, who was thinking about something else, but who, nevertheless, would not let an opportunity pass without expressing his dislike of Olle, whom he never could bring himself to endure, because, envious and malicious as he always showed himself to be, he was when sober false and bad, and when drunk obstinate and bad. He was at this moment quite tipsy, and just in the humor to irritate Gunnar all the more, as he felt in a position to defend himself from attack, because he now placed himself in the doorway, and could in a moment be down at his beloved distillery, where Gunnar never went.

"Ay, ay!" said he, jeeringly; "you get cattle and other things from the squire; perhaps he may make you a present of an eldest son as well. Ha! ha! ha!"

"Only come out with such a word as that again!" said Gunnar, and looked up to his gun, which was hanging on the wall; but Olle had not stayed to hear the first word of Gunnar's reply: he was already in his brandy sanctuary before Gunnar had spoken, and had swallowed many gulps of this desolating water before Gunnar's blood subsided into calm, and his thoughts hastened again toward the pictures of the future, which incessantly reflected themselves in his fancy, and which

were far less dark than he could have believed some months ago. Gunnar had never, from his childhood, been his own master; had never had the management of his own time; he had, in a word, from his boyish years, been a servant; he had never been able to turn to the right hand nor to the left, according to his own pleasure; had always been compelled to obey commands or prohibitions. He now, on the contrary, saw a time just before him, when, in the intervals of active and zealous labor (and labor never frightened Gunnar), he could do that which he listed; could, if he pleased, go at the earliest cock-crow, with his gun upon his shoulder, out into the woods, and stroll about there as long as he chose, or till hunger drove him home with his heavy game-bag—for Gunnar was, as we know, an excellent shot; or, on the same terms, he could betake himself, in the fresh morning or the cool silent evening, in his little boat to the lake, to pull up one fish after another, for Gunnar was likewise a lucky fisherman, and understood the art very well. He had been born and brought up on the banks of a great inland lake, rich in fish, where, during the whole of his childhood, and afterward in his youth, he amused himself day and night. From this cause, therefore, he mostly managed all the fishing at Grantorp, whenever they wished to have fish to eat; not, however, in the old aristocratic way, where there was the proper fisherman of the establishment, but either it was bought, or it was taken by the servants of the house.

He would now, in the evening, do carpenter's work just as he pleased—chairs, tables, chests, and such things; he would go to church every Sunday, and every Sunday evening he would play on his violin, and sing as much and as loud as he liked. He would, in time, when he had saved money by his gun, by fishing, and other things, buy himself a horse or else a mare, which should have foals, because he had for them an inborn passion; and, in his many brilliant pictures of the future, often stood the image of Elin, who came to see her sister in some beautiful Whitsuntide holidays or at a merry Christmas. In the former case he would amuse her by taking her out upon the lake in his boat; and in the last, he would make for her a stained and polished workbox, for he had learned how to do this from a city cabinet-maker, whom Ma'msell Sara had once had at the Hall.

Another image had likewise its place in these pictures, which began to be more and more prominent as well as that it pos-

sessed a certain pleasure for Gunnar ; namely, he was very fond of children, and when he saw the gardener's pretty little lad of seven years old, he now often thought, "I may myself have such a one in seven years and some months."

Strange enough was it that even Lena, whom he certainly could not bring himself to love, scarcely to tolerate, did not very much stand in the way of these pictures. It is true, she was a clever, industrious, active wife, whom he but seldom saw, and who, when he came home, had all clean and in order, with a good meal ready for him, while she sat at her spinning-wheel, or in her loom, which buzzed and rattled, so that he escaped much conversation with her, to which he felt himself very little inclined, however much she sought for it; yet at the same time he was always friendly and good-tempered toward her. And Lena, on her side, was extremely affectionate towards Gunnar, as well as tolerably kind and reasonable. Sometimes she had, indeed, her own particular meaning in her inquiries respecting the purchase of the furniture and other movables. Gunnar, however, could not greatly object to that, because, on the one hand, Lena's meaning was extremely prudent, and on the other, the greater portion of the expense fell upon her; for, singular enough! although she constantly had money—constantly bought all kinds of "things," and always paid, if not at the very time when she took the wares, at least when the traveling merchant came next on his rounds—constantly went to all the fairs in the town, and always bought something "fine" there; yet she had still, notwithstanding, two years' wages unpaid in the Squire's hands.

Gunnar was thus almost consoled for his compulsory marriage. Besides this, people soon accustom themselves to their fate in youth, and adorn it with all the flowers which fancy and hope can assemble; and not until some time has passed do they make the discovery that these flowers have never bloomed, although they were even at one time so fortunate as to see them in bud.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was now the 14th of March, that time for "fitting," when many a one leaves the *lares* and *penates* which protected him in the house, to seek for others similar in another home; for, according to *our* belief, these remain in the empty house, and never quit it.

The day for the fitting was Wednesday; and already, on the preceding Saturday, had Gunnar and Lena arranged for their movables going to the little farm, as well as for obtaining permission to go there on Sunday, together with Bengt, to get the place a little in order, as the people who were to remove thence were already gone. But when Sunday came, Lena was ill; she said she had a severe pain in her head, and was obliged to lie down, so that Gunnar and Bengt went alone.

"Ah, how splendidly and famously you will live here at Vika!" said Bengt, as they stowed away the new furniture in the new, handsome, and spacious sitting-room. "Here you are coming to live like a prince! Here you have a room both large and fine, and a washhouse; and that pretty little chamber, there, on the other side of the passage; and the little orchard, and the wood, and meadow, and all the great lake in front, and the meadows on the other side. And such a famous cow-house, and all! Don't you remember what a sorrow you made about it at first, before Christmas? Yet, there was certainly something to be troubled about. You are, however, just as lucky as if you had sat upon a wishing stool!"

"Oh! I can not exactly say so," replied Gunnar, in an under voice, because, precisely at the very moment when Bengt was talking about the wishing stool, Gunnar had clambered up to it for a little moment in imagination, and, behold! an image not at all resembling Lena stood there, in the very foreground.

"Yes, and so can I say too," returned Bengt, "and you deserve—I don't know what—because you would not take me for your servant instead of that bull-headed Abraham. I have just now thought about it, and I fancy that Lena will make a managing and a capital mistress, who will keep every thing

exceedingly clean, and will give plenty to eat, though she may, between whiles, quarrel a little."

"Yes, Heaven knows!" answered Gunnar, and thought upon something quite different, and did not think that he was, by so doing, guilty of any thing which was in the least wrong.

"Yes, but look, now, how wondrously neat and handsome it is here!" said Bengt, when they had put every thing in its place, and a good fire was burning on the hearth. Gunnar set out butter, bread and cheese, and brandy; for whilst the work had been going on, the mid-day had already arrived.

"Here's a health! now let us drink to each other; and thou shalt have my thanks for every day that we have been together, and for all the help thou hast given me," said Gunnar, with tears in his eyes; and taking one glass of brandy himself, he offered the other to Bengt.

"Yes, thanks and health!" returned Bengt, striking his glass against that of his companion, "and home and farm-luck to you now, and all time! And it is very wise of you," added he, after both he and Gunnar had emptied their glasses to the bottom, "to take a drop now that you are your own master; for a man may very well take a sup now and then without becoming a drunkard, and he may very well be saved without taking the 'temperance pledge'; and they are foolish who do so, when they can, of themselves, be temperate. But, look you! for old incurable drunkards, and such poor wretches as can not stand alone, the 'temperance pledge' is very well; for, you see, then they know of a certainty that damnation waits them, not exactly for taking a sup; for I don't believe, for my part, that damnation troubles itself about that, but because they are oath-breakers, and do it when, with their hand upon the book, they swore to let it alone. Look you, that is the business, and those are my thoughts about it."

Gunnar was of Bengt's opinion, and considered himself to be such a rational fellow, that he could take a drop but always in moderation. He said he should require it, now that he must so much more frequently be in the wood, and upon the lake. They again took each of them a stout glass, but neither of them felt it any more in their heads than when one of our fine gentlemen takes a mandarin cup of tea into his.

Towards evening, the two young men having finished their business, determined to take a little sail upon the open lake, which was bright as a mirror. This year, the ice had been so

slender, and had melted so early, that already, in March, it had disappeared, and the lake lay now pure and bright, and the evening sun saw itself reflected upon its waters, and smiled thereat, like a young pleasure-loving maiden.

"What a monstrous handsome boat you've got there! What did you give Nils Andersson for it?" asked Bengt.

"Oh," replied Gunnar, "I had a bargain of it with a lot of other things; for, you see, he had no use for it at Tomta, where he scarcely has so much as a duck-pond. But it is quite new and well built, and I shall not spare it; for, do you know, Bengt, I shall spend my life in the wood and on the lake."

"Yes, I see, and I might have done that with you instead of that dunce, Abraham; and if you would take me in autumn," remarked Bengt.

"It seems very nice," answered Gunnar; "but one ought never to take one's best friend for one's servant—that's my honest opinion."

Thus conversed the two young men, as the boat hastily glided, to the rapid stroke of oars, across the lake; and here he who will may easily observe how clear-sighted is Friendship, even among rude and uneducated men; while Love, on the other hand, is blind among them—and almost equally blind is he among those human beings who are first in enlightenment and knowledge.

"Now we must, indeed, turn homeward," said Gunnar, when the evening sun said Good-night, and merely left behind it a crimson light, which tinged the lake till it resembled a sea of blood. "If I were now my own master," continued Gunnar, "I should sit here till the heavens were dark, and the lake also, and the new moon began to shine; for it is the most beautiful thing I know when the moon shines upon the lake, and every stroke of the oar is like a rain of silver. See, it is beautiful, that it is! And when one sings lustily the while, it is delightful!"

"Well, sing now in that way while we row homeward," said Bengt, beseechingly.

"I don't know justly what to sing," replied Gunnar, in the same evasive tone as some of the nightingales of our drawing-rooms, when people ask them to sing something out of "Norma," or the "Huguenots," or "Lucia," or suchlike works.

"Ay!" said Bengt, "sing that one about 'Elin is my sugar deary;' I have not heard you sing it for such a long time."

"Oh! it is not worth any thing," replied Gunnar, and made such an irregular stroke with his oar that the boat became violently unsteady.

"What, the devil!" exclaimed Bengt, who could not swim, "I think certainly you will lay us here upon the mermaid's blue bed; but, look you, I am not going to have that done, for I can not swim like a goose, and fly, and dive, and swing myself this way and that way, in the water, as you can."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Gunnar, in youthful gladness, and shook the little boat more violently than ever, that he might make the otherwise so courageous Bengt scream out. But when Bengt saw that there was no danger, he sat quite silently, and then Gunnar sent the little boat gliding on again, and Bengt began to beg him once more to sing a merry bit of an old song.

"Ah! now do sing about 'Elin is my sugar deary,'" prayed Bengt, "and don't trouble yourself about Olle laughing at you for it on the wedding-day, and singing your beautiful air in such a confoundedly stupid way, for since then you have never once sung it."

"No, indeed," answered Gunnar, and coughed, not because his lungs were oppressed with any thing, but to put some control upon his heart, which began to beat, and on the blood which began to be in a ferment as soon as he thought on the old song which he had formerly sung so often. He moved the oars in the mean time briskly, and kept time to himself as he sang, in the beginning rather tremulously, or in a perfectly new mode, but afterward evenly, and so loud and clear that the mountains listened, and Echo answered.

"Elin is my sugar-deary;
Elin is my raisin-tree;
Elin is my sweet bell cheery;
Elin is great joy to me.
Elin is my heart's best treasure;
Elin is my dear delight;
Every one and altogether,
All in one, is Elin bright."

"Elin do I love sincerely;
Fair as are the roses red;
Fairer than a piece of linen,
Softer than a skein of thread;

Plumper than the large sow feeding,
Rosier than our neighbor's knot,
Light and slender as a fly is,
Brisk as is a rifle-shot.

"Pike shall all be turned to bullhead ;
Oxen shall on wings advance ;
Granite stones be loaves of barley,
Stockholm shall begin to dance ;
Brunkeberg shall be a shallop,
Doctors' shops the churches big,
Ere I can forget my Elin,
For she is my roasted pig !"

"Nay, hold still, Gunnar!" exclaimed Bengt; "that was a monstrous fine echo. Hark how it says, after you, 'roasted pig,' just as plain as a man."

"Yes, yes, it is, indeed, something more than a human being," replied Gunnar, and glanced up to the lofty mountain-shore from which the sound came.

"Now, do you really think," asked Bengt, "that it is a maiden who sits up in the mountains, and talks in this way there, and says the words after one?"

"Yes, that I believe certainly," remarked Gunnar; "for the mountains can not talk at all. But, look you, she never says any thing after one but what she takes a fancy to."

"Well, then, she has taken a monstrous fancy to 'roasted pig,'" remarked Bengt, and Gunnar laughed. "Have you ever seen her?" asked Bengt further.

"No, I never have," returned Gunnar; "but I had an aunt who once saw one when she was a child."

"And how did she look?" inquired Bengt, with great curiosity, because the night was already at hand, and the marvellous begins to have its full force as soon as the sunlight is gone.

"Ay, she was as white as the purest snow, and had coal-black hair, and my aunt saw how she stood upon the mountain, and yawned, and constantly repeated all she heard."

"Oh, bless me! in all my days!" exclaimed Bengt, without doubting a single word of Gunnar's; and a great deal of that implicit belief arose from Gunnar's relating it as if he himself entirely believed it.

"It would be very entertaining if one could sometimes see either the echo, or the mermaid, or the wood-fairy, or suchlike," said Bengt, as he helped Gunnar to make fast the boat, for they were now at land. Now, however, it was almost dark, and

Gunnar's admired new moon had arisen, and looked down upon the two young men, within whose breasts at this moment, perhaps, more pure, earnest, real poetry might be found, than in the whole swarm of "Minstrelsies," and "Poems," and "Songs," and "Fancies," and "Lyrical Pictures," and "Poetic Flowers," etc.

"Bless me! have you never seen any thing of the sort?" (namely, mermaids, wood-nymphs, etc.) said Gunnar, in a certain tone of superiority, as if he himself were intimate with the whole society of spirits and elves with which the superstition of the peasantry, at this moment, peoples the sea, the mountains, woods, valleys, heaths, and even the air.

"No, I have never exactly *seen* any one," replied Bengt, as they rapidly walked homeward by a small path through the deep, thick wood, "but *heard* have I many times both spirits and other goblins."

"Perhaps it would be the best not to talk about suchlike things," suggested Gunnar, "now that we are here in the dark wood, and not a very long way from the witches' caldron and the heathen king's grave, where the ghosts are always so bold on Sunday evenings, and where jack-o'-lanterns are seen; but this much I will tell you, Bengt, that if at any time any thing comes to you which you can't understand, you need only make the sign of the cross before your nose, and say the Lord's Prayer with an honest heart, and it will instantly vanish."

"Have you tried it?" inquired Bengt, with a mysterious feeling of awe, in which, however, a great pleasure was mingled.

"That have I, certainly," answered Gunnar, "when I have so often in the night-time gone through the great, deep wood to mother's."

"No!—but have you? What did they look like?" asked Bengt.

"Why, as to that, I can not exactly say," replied Gunnar, "because I did not stop long enough to stare at them; but as soon as I was aware of them I did as I said, and then I shut my eyes, and went on with a resolute step, and said the Lord's Prayer all the while, and they never did me any harm. But, look you, I have my own thoughts, and they are these: that if a person has not done any thing wrong, he then can go safely both for ghosts and goblins; but if he has any thing bad on his conscience, then they can come and pester him at pleasure."

"Nay, but who is there who has not some sin on his mind?" observed Bengt, quite self-complacently.

"Yes, yes; it is a matter of course," conceded Gunnar, "that we are all of us sinful creatures; but, look you, there is a grand difference when a person does something bad with a deliberate intention or in great wrath; and do you know, Bengt, that many a time I thanked my God when I have been going, as we now are, in the pitch-black night through the thick wood, that He has preserved me from doing what I have many and many a time had a desire to do—that is, to knock Olle on the head!—for, you see, he can incense me to such a degree with *one* thing and *another*—and, among others, with singing after me my songs! And you may well believe that I never would have taken Lena if my conscience had not knocked and thumped within me like a stone in a churn."

"Ay, ay," replied Bengt, who was thinking more about the wood-sprites than about Lena; "ay, ay, if you had not taken her, then the necks, or the woodwomen, or some other monsters, perhaps, would have had you. Many a one who has deceived, and made a fool of a girl, goes about quite unmolested."

For some time they walked on rapidly, and in silence, which at length was broken by Bengt.

"Ah, ah!" exclaimed he; "how solitary and lonesome it will be when you are gone! I think I never shall get used to it! Lonesome will it be in the men-servants' room; lonesome out at work; and lonesome in the kitchen at meals, where you and I always ate out of the same dish!"

"Ay, ay!" answered Gunnar, and sighed. But Gunnar was one of those who moved quickly, and such can seldom participate so much in sorrow as those who stand still. The two young men began now to talk about the future.

"I shall stay where I am for some years, and drudge for another, but afterward I shall look well about me for a nice lass—that I shall," said Bengt. "That Elin, Lena's sister, she was just a girl after my liking," added he, as Gunnar did not answer him.

Gunnar stopped, and stood still amid his quick walking, but he said nothing, and Bengt asked, "What is amiss with you? Did you see any thing?"

"Oh, no, nothing," replied Gunnar, for he did not feel his conscience so heavy, but that he might burden it with a lie; and now it was his turn to talk about the future.

"Yes," said he, "Abraham (the stupid fool) will come on Wednesday, and then there will be only hard work all the spring, and, look you, so long Lena will stand on her legs; but in the hot summer, when she will need help, I will have mother to come; for I want, first of all, to see what sort of housewife Lena will be, for never could I bear that she should behave ill to mother; and when she comes to want her help, then I think that she will behave well enough to her. And in the Midsummer holidays, if all is well, then we shall have a little merrier; for look you, then—" but Gunnar did not get any farther; he came to a stand-still, but that was in his conversation.

"Yes, how was it?" said Bengt. "Did not Elin promise to come to you at Midsummer, if her mother was brisk and well?"

"Oh, ay! she certainly did talk about it," answered Gunnar, and immediately changed the subject.

Thus conversing, the two young men continued their walk hastily onward, and reached Grantorp about nine o'clock. They both went together directly into the men-servants' room, to know what time it was, and whether the others were still up, and had supped. Supper was just over, and all the servants, as well as a few of their acquaintance, were now assembled in the room, before a good fire, smoking their pipes, laughing and chattering on this holiday evening. Nobody exactly saluted Gunnar and Bengt, who had spoken, on entering, a general "Good evening!" and then "God's peace be with you!" was given in return, and the two went forward, hung up their caps, and drew near the fire to warm themselves.

"What will there be for work to-morrow?" asked Gunnar, turning to the overseer.

"Bless me! how indifferent he pretends to be; just as if nothing had happened!" said Olle, and laughed, with his hideous fiend-like laugh of derision.

"And what may that be?" replied Gunnar, in a tone of defiance; for he was always excited to anger when Olle opened his mouth.

"Bless me! What! he pretends to be ignorant! ha! ha! ha!" screamed Olle. "It is just as if he never knew such a thing could happen. Ay, now you have got something to do! Ha! ha! ha!"

"Speak out what it is, then, you devil's hound!" said Gun-

nar, enraged. "How shall I know what happens while I am away?"

"Do you not know," said Overseer Anders, who was an elderly, sober, and sensible man, "do you not know that your wife had a son at noon?"

"Yes, and a red-haired one into the bargain! Ha! ha! ha!" laughed out Olle scornfully.

Gunnar heard not another word. He stood for a moment confounded in the middle of the room, pale as a marble statue, and without much more life or thought; after that he rushed like a tempest toward the door, and dashed through it.

"Ha! ha! ha! Now he has some curiosity about his red-haired crown prince," laughed Olle, as Gunnar, with a tremendous bang, closed the door after him.

"Curse me, if I know what you are talking, grinning, and laughing about," said Bengt, who was not by any means of as irritable a nature as Gunnar, and who had not the same hatred to Olle either, because Olle neither envied or excited Bengt to the same extent; "I, for my part," added Bengt, "think that this is a great misfortune for Gunnar; for, look you, he has now to flit to his place on Wednesday, for then both the beasts and Abraham (the beast!) are to come. But, you see, he would do well to take the old woman to be with him till Lena is up again."

This last remark Bengt made more for himself than for the others, and nobody wondered at Gunnar's disappearance, imagining that he had gone up to Lena, to welcome his new-born son, about whose arrival they only supposed he had a little miscalculated.

All the men-servants retired to bed; the fire went out, but Gunnar did not return, and nobody thought about him.

CHAPTER XV.

BUT Gunnar! what did he think? He thought nothing. He merely hastened on, careless about bad spirits, but with all the pangs of hell in his breast; without hat, through wood and bog, scarcely lighted by that new moon which he loved so

much, but which he did not now once remark; and about midnight stood before his old mother's bolted door. He paused for a moment before he knocked, and the fear of terrifying the old woman was certainly the first intelligible thought that sprang up within him since Olle had been to him a Job's messenger; who had astonished and dismayed him, and who had set every feeling within him in a state of combat. His wounded sensibility towered up to the sky, and upbraided him with his simplicity; his goodness of heart, and his easy faith, laughed at scorn by those demons which he had long since chased away from him, but which now returned; his lost freedom; Elin; in the midst of this the words of the tutor; his own unceasing repugnance; Olle's derision—all these stood before him now in frightful colors. He had, however, nobody to blame but himself; he was too proud to lay the blame on any other than his own conscience; and however pure and clear as a mirror it was, it was not able in this terrible hour to silence and appease all the anguish-pangs which made themselves felt in every part of the young man's soul.

"I shall frighten my poor old mother to death," was his first intelligible thought; and the next, a determination that while he knocked gently on the window, he would announce who he was, and thus would rouse the old woman. In the agitated state, however, in which he was, he knocked much louder on the window than he intended, and his voice in these words—the first that had passed his lips since his last angry demand from Olle that he should *speak out*—was ghastly and hollow, so that the old woman woke up in a great horror out of her first deep sleep, and exclaimed—

"Merciful heaven! Is it thou, Gunnar, or is it thy ghost?"

"It is I," replied Gunnar; and he shook at the bolted door with violence, as he now no longer feared to frighten the old woman. But that was the very thing to frighten her, and she cried out at once—

"Gunnar, Gunnar, is it thou, or is it *something evil* in thy shape, which thus comes and goes through the bolted door?"

"Oh, it is I, sure enough," answered Gunnar, entering, and throwing himself spiritlessly upon the sofa where he had slept so soundly and so calmly in his younger years.

Mother Ingrid hastened to rouse up the fire; but when by the light of a blazing stick she came to see Gunnar's countenance, disfigured by anguish, suffering, and passion, the sweat-

drops upon his white, smooth forehead, and the deathly paleness of his cheeks, she again exclaimed—

“Gunnar, my son, once more do I ask thee, is it *actually* thou, or is it thy ghost, or hast thou taken the life of a human being?”

“No, I *have* not yet, but I *shall*!” replied Gunnar, in the fervor of an idea which had first at this moment lighted up, or rather flamed up within him—that a bullet would pay for his dishonor; that blood would cleanse away shame and insult. Suspicion lightened, and wrath thundered; and the object of both and of Gunnar’s hatred and fury, was, and continued to be, no other than Olle. Toward him, however, he had feelings, which, notwithstanding his northern nature, did not accord with the Corsican proverb, *La vendetta transversale*, for he would, in this moment of madness, have been ready to fall upon even an adherent of Olle.

“Eternal Father!” said the mother, trembling to that degree that the burning wood was ready to fall out of her hand. “What dost thou mean by this horrible word? Do not talk in that way, Gunnar, because, with the help of God, thou dost not mean what thou sayest, but God hears even the ungodly word. Recollect thyself now, and then tell me what it is so dreadful that has happened to thee.”

“Me!” answered Gunnar, with a countenance the least in the world calmer, but still dark as night, “nothing has happened to me, but Lena—the beast!—the worm!—”

“Gunnar, Gunnar,” said the old woman, admonishingly, “do not talk in that way of thy wedded wife; thou art doing a great sin. What, then, has she done?”

“She has had a child!”

“Well, that you knew would happen beforehand.”

“Yes, but not *now*, not *to-day*.”

“Gunnar, Gunnar!” besought the mother again, “do not tempt God with thy tricks. I could see plain enough that thou hadst told me a lie, and many a time have I prayed God that he would forgive thee for it.”

“I lied!” exclaimed Gunnar, and rose up hastily, “no, never I, but Lena, and she has lied—the basest lie which a woman can be guilty of.”

“Mother Ingrid seated herself beside him, took his hand in hers, rested his burning head against her maternal bosom, and endeavored by all means in her power to calm him, as well as

to get him to talk about all these distressing circumstances. She obtained her object, Gunnar became somewhat calm, and he succeeded in wholly convincing her of the truth of his word and of his calculations. No representations, however, in the world, could induce him to promise that he would be quiet, and not take revenge on Olle, who was the *only one* on whom his suspicions fell. The old woman talked, besought him, reasoned with him, but all in vain. She succeeded, however, in awakening that kindness of heart which even the frenzy of his mind could not destroy; and he began to feel almost a satisfaction in forgiving Lena, or at all events in pitying her; but for Olle he had no compassion.

"Yes, mother," said he at length in conclusion, "you may say what you will, Olle shall pay the reckoning for it, and you readily can, if you will, put him on his guard against me; for should even the king himself and his officers, and whoever else, choose to stand by him, I would fall upon him, let me see him *when* and *where* I might. Let him mind, therefore, and keep out of my way."

Towards morning the mother and son began to talk a little more calmly over these distressing circumstances. The mother advocated reconciliation and harmony, the son would not listen to a single word of the kind.

"Impossible, dearest mother!" said he—"a downright and absolute impossibility that I should be able to take Lena to myself, my own wedded wife, when she has acted in this way towards me, and when I regard Olle as the father of her child. No, look you, that can never be, and a mother can never once wish or ask it.

And now they talked over and over that which he so truly believed, judging by Olle's jeering words, in which so much malicious pleasure was exhibited, as well as by his former affair with Lena, much more than by her inclination to him, which certainly never seemed very great, for, on the contrary, it always appeared as if she could not bear him.

At the very moment while Gunnar was talking on this subject he suddenly sunk into silence, and, to Mother Ingrid's greatest amazement, exclaimed at length, after a long time of silence and deep thought, as well as with a great change in the expression of his countenance,

"Mother, do you know what? Olle is innocent!"

"Well, but that I have said and believed from the very be-

ginning," replied the old woman, not without a faint smile passing over her withered lips.

Gunnar did not see it, nor comprehend, at all events, its meaning, but continued,

"Ay, he is innocent, as you say, mother, because Olle was away from the middle of May, when he went into the militia to be drilled, for, you see, he had been excused for several years because he was not tall enough, and then he lay sick of ague in the hospital till long after midsummer; so he is innocent."

The conversation of the mother and son now took another direction, and Mother Ingrid in the end said sufficient to obtain from Gunnar a sacred promise that he would not speak with any single human being, let it be whoever it might, until she, Mother Ingrid, had had some talk with Lena; that he would keep himself quiet and peaceable, and go in a straightforward way and ask advice of the clergyman, and above all things not go and publish the whole affair before he had done this.

In the mean time the day had already advanced, and after a deal of trouble, Mother Ingrid induced Gunnar to accompany her to the Hall; where he was least of all inclined to go. The mother put his disarranged apparel in order, stroked his hair from his face, and said, in conclusion,

"Dear lad! thou shouldst really have something within thee, otherwise thou wilt never stand it. Thou hast not tasted a morsel since noon yesterday. Eat a crumb now, and then let us two go, for it's getting toward evening, the sun is fast going down."

"No, thank you, mother! I could not possibly eat any thing," replied Gunnar; "but if you have a drop or two to give me, that I will be glad of."

"Really," said Mother Ingrid slowly, while she went to the cupboard, "art *thou* now, my dear Gunnar, going to take to brandy again, which thou hast so often condemned and forsworn?"

"Oh, yes, but it was only folly," replied Gunnar; it does one no good to let drinking alone, that I can very well see; and I can very well drink a drop now and then without making a drunkard of myself; I am too old and too wise for that now, and I find that a drop tastes well when nothing else does."

"Yes, yes; so said thy father before thee and thy brother, and ill went it with them both," sighed Mother Ingrid, and thought within herself how much misery Gunnar was already

suffering because of brandy, although at this moment she would not remind him of it, but poured out for him a quarter of the brandy which she had bought to give to the mason, who was to come some day to look at the poor old woman's half-tumbled-down chimney.

Gunnar poured out a draught for himself—he poured out two—and then he said,

“Look thou! now, indeed, we will go in Jesus' name.”

CHAPTER XVI.

Few words passed between the mother and son during this long walk through the woods, which was certainly not a rapid one, because Mother Ingrid was not able to go so quickly, and Gunnar did not hasten her, but, on the contrary, made long silent pauses, leaning his burning and throbbing forehead against some tree trunk, or laying a little ice upon it whenever he could find any in the rifts of the rocks.

It was already twilight when they reached the Hall, and those who met Gunnar said, with astonishment and a smile, “Well, at last!” or, “Now, you are come at length!” or, “It is well you are come—we have had such a search after you!” or the like.

Bengt came forward to Gunnar and said,

“But where, in the Lord Jesus' name, have you been? We have been seeking prodigiously for you. The minister was here, by chance, just at noon, but he was in a dreadful hurry, so the child had to be baptized full gallop. Ma'msell Sara carried it, and Anders, and Lotta, and I, we stood sponsors; and that is the reason why I have my Sunday clothes on; and the Squire set off this morning ever so early, and does not come back for several days, and that was a good thing, else you would have had abuse enough. But where in the world have you been?”

Gunnar did not look up during this address, but followed Bengt into the men-servants' room, while Mother Ingrid went up to that part of the house in which Lena was.

“What!” said Bengt astonished, “shall you not go up to

your wife, and look at your lad? He is a big fellow, with red hair, and cry did he like a ghost when they dipped him, so that he has got your singing voice, however."

Gunnar was silent, and threw himself upon a bench, stroked his hair down over his moist forehead, and held his hands before his eyes, and ground his teeth silently and imperceptibly together.

"What in the world is amiss with you?" asked Bengt, who saw, nevertheless, how he was suffering. "You are as ill as a dog, that I can see! Go and lie down a bit, and then you'll be better. Will you have a sup?—I have a drop in my case bottle."

With this Bengt poured a large draught, which Gunnar, without thinking, swallowed, and then lay down upon the bench where he sate, and fell asleep in a few moments. Youth, weariness, health, and a good conscience exercised their influence upon the young man, who, after a most fatiguing day, which succeeded a perfectly sleepless night, had not taken a morsel of refreshment,—nothing but brandy, and had walked many miles in this state. He slept, and good angels rejoiced assuredly because of it.

In the mean time Mother Ingrid went up with slow steps to the room in which was Lena, and entered it with silence and solemnity. Lena was in bed; but still quite strong and well. No one was with her in the chamber. A deep crimson covered her countenance; which was somewhat paler than ordinary, and her eyes were not able to meet the old woman's stern and grave glance. Mother Ingrid walked up to the bedside, and seated herself. Not a word was exchanged. After a long and anxious silence, Lena said with a mixture of boldness and embarrassment,—

"Perhaps you would like to see the lad, grandmother?"

"Oh, I am indifferent about that," said Mother Ingrid, with severity; "because although, to my poor Gunnar's misfortune, I have become your mother-in-law, it does not follow that I am grandmother to the lad."

Lena was silent.

"For shame, Lena!" said Mother Ingrid, after another oppressive silence. "For shame! never, no, never should I have believed it of you! I thought, on the contrary, that you were excessively fond of my Gunnar, else, you may believe me, I should not have taken so much pains to get him to have you,

so much as it went against the poor fellow's inclination. I fancied that you loved him above any thing else on earth, for so you seemed to do."

"Yes, God, and my Father know, that I both did and do so," said Lena, bursting into a torrent of tears.

"Well, then, how could you go and make a fool of him in such a dreadful way?" asked Mother Ingrid.

"Make a fool of him!" exclaimed Lena, with averted eyes, in which the tears were already dry, "Befooled him—it is not me that has fooled him. It would have been he that would have made a fool of me, if he would not have had me—that I know!"

"Ah, you know very well what I mean," said Mother Ingrid dryly; "it is not worth your while to try to throw dust in my eyes. Blood is thicker than water, and I know whom I can believe best."

"Yes, God knows what Gunnar has been talking to you about," said Lena, but still without looking the old woman in the face. "The lad does not remember, I reckon, what took place, and many things which happen when folks are drunk they forget when they are sober."

"Oh, be quiet with such talk," said Mother Ingrid, "and don't tell me such things. Your own words prove that you have your senses about you, and that you understand what I mean: and as to what you say about folks doing things when they are drunk, I don't believe that of Gunnar, for I *know* that he never told me a lie, and that he never got drunk more than once in the autumn, and unlucky was the time! But now, look you again! There are some people who can tell a lie before God and the priest, and such can also tell a lie to an old woman body; and this I can tell you, that you have no more shame in you than I don't know what; and that Gunnar is not one to be played with, and that he will take it to the assizes, for he is not bound to burden himself with other folk's children, and to slave and strive for them."

With this Lena began to cry distractedly, and to wring her hands, and to say that she would go and drown herself (a threat which the peasant often uses, and which others believe after it has taken place) if Gunnar cast her off; said she should be the most obedient and devoted wife in the world, if Gunnar would only show her mercy, and, in the end, acknowledged to Mother Ingrid the real fact, and besought her with clasped hands to

set every thing straight; assured her—asseverated and swore by all which was sacred—that nobody in the whole world but she, and *one more*, knew the honest truth, so that Gunnar would never be brought to shame for “his goodness in showing her mercy;” such was the expression which Lena used in her affliction.

Mother Ingrid sate in silence, and listened to Lena’s prayers and representations, irresolute as to what was right or what was wrong; what she ought to do or what to let alone. But kind-heartedness, that gift of God, which is the symbol of womanly justice, gained in the end the ascendancy; and she promised, weeping silently the while, to endeavor to set all things straight between them, if Lena on her part would promise henceforth in every possible way to conduct herself correctly and to be discreet. Lena promised every thing in her time of need; she promised, as the saying is, “gold and green woods,” because, carried away by the violent, unbridled love which she really felt for Gunnar, and which increased every day in proportion to his coldness toward her, the idea that she might lose him, that she might be separated from him now that she was just about to live with him in comfort, was a thought very much more dreadful to her than all the shame of her behavior, all the ignominy, all the scorn and the ridicule which she well knew would be her lot if Gunnar put in practice Mother Ingrid’s threat. Willy and crafty as Lena was, she knew very well in what way to talk, so as to influence Mother Ingrid’s excellent heart, and to represent the picture to her in the most beautiful and attractive colors.

“And never shall Gunnar,” said she, in her zealous persuasion, “need to slave himself and struggle for the child (if it live), because I shall take sufficient care of *it*, and *it* will always bring us good friends, and we shall, perhaps, enjoy many an advantage which other peasants don’t get; and I shall wait on Gunnar and you, mother-in-law, like a servant, and that for all my days: and Gunnar shall never, and you shall never, repent of your goodness to me, but I shall, all my life long, do my best to deserve it.”

Thus talked Lena; and Mother Ingrid listened to both promises and advantages. When a person has striven through a whole long life, at all events through the greater part of it, into old age, with every possible kind of want; feels himself forlorn and forsaken, there is a great temptation to such a one

in a certainty of more quiet and more prosperous days by the side of his beloved ones; and in Mother Ingrid's class, at least, many deviate from the *point d'honneur* which every one forms to himself, and people shut their eyes to a disgrace, the guilt of which is not their own, and which, therefore, does not weigh heavily on their conscience, and which need in no wise appear before the world; they shut their eyes to this, even when their hearts are quite right. So, at all events, did Mother Ingrid; and she promised, sighing deeply the while, to use all her influence with Gunnar, but by no means answering for her own success.

The two women had just arrived at this point in their important conversation, which was carried on in a low and whispering voice, when the door softly opened, and Ma'msell Sara entered with a plate and a basin in her hand.

"How is it with the good woman and her little son?" asked she, full of kindness. "I have brought with me a little suitable and nourishing food, which will do them both good. See! Good evening, Mother Ingrid! How goes the world with you down there in the wood? I can well understand why you should come thence to see your son's son. But you should have come a little earlier, and then you could yourself have carried your child's child to be baptized, and have named him yourself. As it was, I made free to do it all; for the clergyman was just setting out on a journey, and was in a hurry, and we did not know of a certainty that you would come, and no creature could find Gunnar, which we all thought was very odd."

"Yes, every thing happens in this world for the best," replied Mother Ingrid evasively; "and the child has certainly been better off for being carried by you than if it had been by me; and, as regards Gunnar, why—he had the goodness to wait for me, poor old body, and I could not walk fast all that long way."

"Well, and what does he think about his lad?" inquired Ma'msell Sara; but nobody gave her an answer, and therefore she continued—"Yes, poor Gunnar, he has really done himself most wrong by his folly, for now he must go and help himself alone, as he best can, for some weeks to come; for I will not hear a word about Lena going down to Vika before she has been churched, because, first and foremost, both she and the child need the quietness which they may have here, and which

she, methinks, can not find there in her household; and if she went, people might think that my brother and I turned her out, as it has so unfortunately happened; and such a thing is not to be done, for the last words which the squire said before he set out this morning were, that Lena was to stay quietly here, and be nursed here in the best manner till she was perfectly recovered. Oh, no, don't cry, now," said she, turning to Lena, who put her hands before her eyes, not exactly to conceal her tears, but many other feelings; "but you must beg," continued Ma'msell Sara, "that grandmother will help Gunnar till then, and eat now of that which I have brought, for it is good, and it will do you good also. Has mother Ingrid had coffee? Not! How? What has the housekeeper been thinking about?"

And with these words Ma'msell Sara went out.

"Now, do go down, by all means, to Gunnar, dear good mother-in-law," besought Lena; and Mother Ingrid went, with a sigh, about a black business.

Arrived in the men-servants' room, she found Gunnar still profoundly asleep, and Olle standing beside him trying to lay a sham baby, made out of an old coat and a garter, on his arm, to vex him when he awoke.

"You have ugly tricks with you, Olle!" said Mother Ingrid, and took away the coat. "Be on your guard against Gunnar; he is as good as gold as long as he is not provoked, but if he is, he does not rightly know——"

"Hold your tongue, old scarecrow!" said Olle, laughing. "Keep your old toothless jaws still! It's only young lasses that have any business to preach, and not old scrubs like you!"

Gunnar moved himself in his sleep; Olle rushed out of the door, and Mother Ingrid availed herself of the occasion to wake Gunnar.

"Wake up, Gunnar," said Mother Ingrid; "I want to talk with you. I have a deal to say to you, to which you must listen with sense and calmness. Come, now."

Mother and son again betook themselves to the road through the wood, but they did not go silently as on the former occasion, but Mother Ingrid talked, and Gunnar made objections. Mother Ingrid made use of all her maternal power and womanly gift of persuasion; Gunnar combated for his dislike, long and perseveringly, but when Mother Ingrid reached her solitary dwelling, Gunnar said, in a low and hollow voice:

"Well, be it so, then, mother; for my happiness or unhappi-

ness you are answerable ! I will do as you would have me, let come what may. I will not seek for revenge on Lena or *that other* ; may God only grant that he goes out of my way, if I meet him with my good loaded gun ! My life and my youth are both wasted, let me do whatever I may. It, perhaps, would be wrong to carry the affair to the assizes, however just my cause may be before God : and if I did so, why, then, I should never come near this place, but go out with all my troubles into the world ; and, look you, then I could not take you with me, and that," said Gunnar, with great energy, "*that*, look you, does not weigh lightly in the scale in which my determination is laid. Yes ; so good night to you, mother. Now there is no more to be said on *that* business. God only grant that Lena will do all that she has promised to you, and God grant that she behave well to you ; yet I shall keep my word, and stand by it as an honest fellow should do. Yes, and you will come to Vika the day after to-morrow, according to agreement. Good-night, mother !"

Gunnar returned with heavy and slow steps to the hall. When he reached home, every body was gone to bed, and most of them were asleep ; and as they all believed that Gunnar was up-stairs with his wife, nobody wondered at his absence, or made any inquiries about him. Gunnar therefore lay down, weary, without having tasted a morsel to eat through the whole of that long, terrible day, which cut away from the life of the young man many years.

The following day he was taciturn and reserved. Toward noon, he went with a firm, calm, and almost heavy step, up to Lena's chamber. As soon as he entered she began to weep aloud, took his hands, and would kiss him, and behaved in the most humble and penitent manner. Gunnar, however, withdrew his hands, turned aside with anger and repugnance from both mother and child, and yet endeavored not to show these feelings in so strong and powerful a degree as he actually felt them. He merely said—

"God comfort thee, Lena, if thou do not keep *every single word* thou hast promised to my mother ; and God comfort thee if any one comes and points their finger at me ; and God comfort thee if in one way or another thou at any time deceive me, for if I get angry, I tell thee beforehand, that I do not know what I then do ; such has my temper been at all times, and it is not improved now, that I know by myself."

Having said these words, Gunnar went his way.

And here we will take a leap forward in time, that is, from now till the autumn of the same year, as well as pass over Gunnar's solitary time with his mother at Vika; his first settling down there; Abraham's entrance on the scene: Lena's arrival and establishment; the small changes which, by little and little, and day by day, were made within the humble habitation.

CHAPTER XVII.

LENA had now gained her object. If Gunnar, conformably to his first threat, had gone immediately to the clergyman, and told him about the actual state of affairs, then, perhaps—so feared Lena—he would have believed him, and the whole thing might have taken an extremely unfortunate turn for her; but *now*, thought she, now he can do nothing, for it is quite too late. And, in consequence of this security, she threw off, by degrees, all her assumed character, and exhibited herself, before long, in her true form, and that was displeasing enough. Time had produced the same change in her temper as it had done in outward nature; important changes had taken place, but it had not been all at once, but so gradually that nobody knew *when* or *how* they happened. That which had been soft and tender in spring was now hard and stern; and as we are not intending to dwell long upon this period of time, we will merely give a little example of the prevailing tone in the house.

"What in all the world," exclaimed Lena, sharply, one day in the cold month of November, "what are you mumbling about there in the chimney-corner, mother-in-law? It was a miserable thing that Ma'msell Sara should throw away upon you that wretched elder-flower tea and honey, and stuff you with the notion that it would do any good to such an old thing as you; for now you are everlastingly poking in the chimney-corner, with your messes, and kindling the fire, whether it is wanted or not! I think it would be a deal better if you were washing the cabbage, that it could be chopped for supper, if Gunnar ever comes in. What, the deuce!" continued she,

turning to the laborer Abraham, "are you got into the corner? Have you not had your victuals, and swallowed them into the bargain? What are you sitting there and thrusting your nose in for? Be off with you, and go to your work, you cursed reptile, who neither earn your clothes nor your victuals! I must say," continued she, when Abraham had left the house with great speed, "that of all Gunnar's schemes, that of taking such a downright fool as Abraham for a laborer was the most stupid. I never would say a word about it, however, if Gunnar were ever in the house, or if he ever did any thing himself; but, look you, when he has nothing to be doing, then he spends his time in the wood and on the lake, day and night through; and we shall see how it turns out."

"Lena, Lena," replied Mother Ingrid, whose gentleness and forbearance never failed her when Lena merely broke out upon herself, partly because Mother Ingrid's temper was of that kind, and partly because she determined to do *all*, to bear *all*, suffer *all*, to sacrifice *all*, merely to be under the same roof with her son; but she never could patiently bear to hear Lena abuse Gunnar, which, indeed, she very seldom did when he was present, but often in his absence, because she really felt a sort of love for him, but of that kind which generates importunity, jealousy, caprice, and anger, much more than tenderness and actual true devotion: "Lena, Lena," therefore said Mother Ingrid, "do think a little about what you are saying; is not Gunnar employed both when he is in the wood and upon the lake? Who has been eating little fish all the week, if not we? say nothing about the large fish which he has sent up to the hall and sold; and have you forgotten the great cock o' the wood which Gunnar brought home with him last week?"

"No, no, Heaven forbid!" said Lena, jeeringly; "there is not much in his bringing *something* sometimes, for he mostly comes home empty-handed, and yet for all that he is so mad after going and stopping out in the woods, or on that devilish lake, that he'll stop there altogether one of these fine days!"

"Oh, Lord in heaven forbid it!" replied Mother Ingrid; and thought to herself, "Yes, what is, indeed, the reason that he does not like to stop at home? Not *my* fault, as I hope; I fear at the same time."

And Mother Ingrid was right; it was dissatisfaction, that most terrible of all home-feelings, which drove Gunnar as much as possible from his home; and Lena was also right when she

said sometimes in her wrath, "I quite believe that the house burns him!" for there was a something which burned and tortured Gunnar merely to see Lena and her child, which he never but once had noticed, and that was when he was alone in the house. Then he had gone up to the cradle, looked upon the sleeping child for a few moments, and said to himself, "Eternal God, grant that I may never in my wrath and my hatred fall upon that poor little innocent creature!" and then he patted the child upon the cheek, and went out.

Gunnar was entirely altered in temper, and in every thing. He was gloomy and grave; nobody ever saw him smile; he was no longer heard to sing; and his violin hung unstrung and dusty upon the wall; but the old ever-loaded gun was, on the contrary, so much the cleaner, and the wild creatures of the wood were aware of it, and the trees of the wood might also have told, if they could, that many a shot of Gunnar's was merely at a mark, a pleasure, almost the only one he had at this time, of which nobody had any idea, because he himself thought that it was bad economy of shot and powder. He, therefore, was silent on the subject, but could not withstand this inclination, whence it came that he was very soon a matchless shot.

Gunnar never did his stipulated days' work at Grantorp; these fell to the lot of Abraham, and caused him (Gunnar) merely to get a glimpse of the squire two or three times in the course of the year, and then he turned out of the way, and the squire did the same.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AND now we say farewell for a little time to the cottage at Vika, with all its passions (for Abraham had a passion for eating, drinking, and sleeping), all the love, all the thirst for power, all the hatred and disgust, which found place within its narrow limits, and beneath its low roof. Maternal love revealed itself there in two such dissimilar forms, and filial love likewise, but then there was the love which was concealed, and the dislike which was visible, under the false masks of indifference. And

now we leave this dwelling and enter into *another*, similar to it, at many miles distance, and that to the northward, where likewise a new year's May sun glanced in through the bright and not very large window-panes, and mournfully lighted up a death-bed, on which an elderly, and to us unknown, woman, struggled with the last powers of life against death, which already held her in his embrace. By the bedside lay, upon her knees, a young girl, who wept; and when at length the dying one heaved her last sigh, made her last convulsive struggle; for the last time endeavored to live, but for the first time was defeated, then did the young girl burst forth into violent weeping, and exclaim, in her inexpressible anguish, although none but the dead heard her, "Oh, God! what will become of me, poor creature! who have lost my kind, my dear support in this world, my adored, my beloved mother? Now have I no one—no one in all the world to care for me, excepting my sister Lena."

And now came in the weeping female neighbors; for Elin's mother, a kind, pious, right-minded, and God-fearing woman, was greatly beloved by the village in which she lived; and now those anxious operations after death were commenced—those preparations which precede decay, and which are alike painful and repugnant in cottage and in palace, especially when they are moistened by the bitter tears of heartfelt affection.

This was more than commonly the case in this instance. Elin had been the apple of her mother's eye, and the mother had been Elin's whole existence. Now the one was cold and lifeless, and the other, fatherless, motherless, and penniless! The mother had had a little annuity and a deal of help from many quarters, and, besides this, she was a very skillful needle-woman and weaver, so that she and Elin were very well off; lived most comfortably and respectably, in a little house outside the town, which Elin's mother enjoyed during her lifetime. But now all was entirely gone at once, and Elin was homeless.

It is true, that both on the right hand and on the left Elin received offers of a home for the moment, for that she should remain alone in the desolate house with her dead mother was not to be thought of. The nearest female neighbor, therefore, who had always been a good friend of the deceased, took Elin home with her. She was the wife of a well-to-do peasant, who had only one son, of the same age as Elin, who had been brought up with her, and who "went and read" at the same

time that she did, from which circumstance, in this class of life, a friendship generally is the consequence—frequently a bond of union which endures through the whole life. The father, a creditable, clever, but austere peasant, plainly foresaw that the portionless Elin would become dangerous to the peace of his rich son, and he was therefore silently dissatisfied with the state of affairs, yet still he received the poor girl in her great affliction with the utmost hospitality, and immediately became her supporter and her adviser.

“Now, thou must not cry so much, dear child!” said he to her, when his wife returned with her from the house of mourning, “but thou must call in thy reason, give thyself up to it, and think in this way: that thy mother could not live always, and that she is well off where she is. And now we will set about and do the best for thee that we can, and my son, Erik, shall set off and ride to thy sister and brother-in-law, and bid them come here, so that they can arrange about the funeral, and all the rest, and then thou canst return home with them, or to somewhere near their place; for, look, thou hast no other relations, I know, hereabouts, and must be longing, I can very well believe, to be with thy only kith and kin.”

Elin was satisfied with all that Father Anders proposed. He was regarded as the wisest man in the place, and as one who always knew to a tittle what he and every body else ought to do, or to leave undone. His word was thus decisive; and Elin, in her great grief and necessity, actually had only one single wish, and that was to see again her sister, who in person and voice somewhat resembled the dead mother. As Elin, however, was only imperfectly acquainted with Lena, who was thirteen or fourteen years older than herself, and who had been away from home ever since her childhood, and as Elin had only seen her during one short visit, which she had paid to her mother, as well as the twice when Elin herself had been at Grantorp, she therefore imagined that she should find in Lena, if not the beloved and lamented mother, at least an elder sister who would resemble her in kindness and affection, as well as be a stay for the future. She therefore thanked Father Anders as much as she was able in her deep sorrow; and Erik, who would gladly have gone to death for his playmate, the lovely and good friend of his childhood, had, a very short time after the arrangement was made, mounted Brunte and set out upon his journey. And Father Anders had by this means killed

many birds with one stone ; he had, at one and the same time, exhibited his prudence, his helpfulness at the time of need, his unselfishness in sending out his own horse and son, as well as succeeded in obtaining the absence of this latter during the greater part of the time that Elin was with them ; he had, besides this, devised an opportunity for her quickly leaving, and probably for always, the place in which he lived ; for Father Anders, like many another father, hoped and trusted that love and absence never could go together, and that all love would be vanquished by time.

CHAPTER XIX.

LENA sat and scolded in the house at Vika.

"It is a cursed thing that I should get this deuced complaint in my foot, so that I can't go and look how that lazy fellow, Abraham, has hoed up the potatoes ! Mother-in-law, you can go out and see whether he does it tidily or not, and give him a waking if he does it badly. What now ! need you put on your jacket to do a little errand like that in the warm summer ? You're beginning to be delicate are you ? It's not weather to get cold in ! Nay, bless me ! mind what you are about ! Don't you see the lad standing just behind you ? My word, if you'd knocked him down ! Yes, come hither, my little Gustaf, and thou shalt have mother's pincushion to play with, as thou can't have grandmother's spectacles, without her screeching and screaming, and saying that thou art doing wrong. Come here to mother, my little God's angel, all the rest are cross with thee !" (Mother Ingrid returns.) "Now, what has Abraham to say for himself ? Is he doing any thing, or is he doing nothing ? What, then ! do ye call that being industrious ? I should have done that bit in half-an-hour, and he's been at it ever since day-dawn. Did you see any thing of Gunnar ? That's a devilish wood where he stops so everlastingly ! and that just now, when I am ailing in my foot, and can't move from the spot !"

"Yes, what would you that he should be doing that I can not

do?" said Mother Ingrid, mildly, while she was busying herself about the fire.

"Botheration take you! do you go out and bestir yourself in the cow-house," said Lena, enraged. "It's a downright shame, when a woman who is not older or more infirm than you are can't do such things! Old Britta of Björkebo is a very different sort of body; she fodders, and manures, and milks, and looks after the cows like any man."

"Ay, look ye, she hasn't got such a weakly chest as I have," replied Mother Ingrid, as mildly as before; "besides, you know very well that I would do all this, but Gunnar won't let me—he'll hardly let me milk."

"Yes, that I believe," answered Lena, "for so as Gunnar humors you, and sets store by you, have I never seen any menfolk do, and that to an old woman! The fiend fetch me!" added she, with bitterness; "I'll never believe that he bought the mare, and made himself the cart, only to drive you to church in. It was a downright shame to see how conceitedly you two, both of you, sat in it on Sunday. But if I only get well in my foot, then things shall go on properly, both with such journeys and the rest of it."

"Thou shouldst not envy me the ride," said Mother Ingrid, "for it had nearly been my last journey. And if thou hadst been holding the rein, as thou wantedst to do, when Olle, out of wanton mischief, frightened the young horse, and if Bengt had not started forward and thrown himself before the horse, then it would have run away right down the stony hill. And as to Gunnar having bought the horse, and made the cart, just on purpose to give *me* a ride, I think it is a shame of thee to say so, thou that know'st so well that Gunnar has need of the horse for all his business, now he has got Anderson's tillage too; and thou know'st well enough that thou might'st have had a ride in the new cart on Sunday if thy foot had been well."

"Had a ride! Yes, I know very well I might have had a ride," repeated Lena, scornfully; "but then, mind ye, Gunnar wouldn't have looked as pleased and as conceited as when he set you by his side and acted as coachman."

Mother Ingrid was silent, and Lena was right. Gunnar was not destitute of a good deal of pride, and with that a little vanity. In whatever class he might have been brought up, he was one of those who would always have been seen, always have made themselves distinguished for their personal qual-

ities; and such as these have often the little weakness of desiring that all which belongs to them may be admired. Had Gunnar been gifted with birth or riches, or with both of these, he would never have been one of our laughable and despised dandies, who will be first in fashion and show, the last to undertake any thing which will not be talked about and attract the public gaze. Gunnar would never have belonged to this class, but to that other which must have *every thing* which is theirs, from the least to the greatest, from that which is seen by all eyes to that which is visible to no eye but their own, as beautiful, as comfortable, as suitable to its purpose, as elegant as possible. Had Gunnar been a magnate, probably nobody's horses or carriage could have compared with his; he would have been unrivaled in his outfit, in his manner of demeaning himself, and in his ability to be at once the proudest among the proud, and the best toward all his dependants. As it was, he was only a poor peasant; but we will not deny that he was conscious of a great degree of pleasure and self-satisfaction when he, at length, saw his own young and able horse trot forth in the neat and well-made cart, the labor of his own hands, which cost him many a sweat-drop, and many a half-night, and which now, new painted and grand, should convey—not Lena, but his old, affectionate, and beloved mother to church. It is possible that this had constituted, for a long time, one of Gunnar's most lively desires. And now, at length, it was accomplished; now, for the first time, he helped the old woman up into the vehicle, seated himself beside her, and escaped away from Lena, and all that upon a bright and beautiful day in spring! Ah! it was too much to expect that that young mind should not be a little proud, and that this feeling should not impress its stamp upon the lofty pure forehead, the princely arched eyebrows, the fine, straight, and perfectly aristocratic nose, and the haughty and curved upper lip. Lena saw it of a truth. Olle made the discovery also, and now, as always, in his envy and spite, attempted to do all the mischief he could, but which, this time, fortunately did not succeed. But, as real merit smiles at the vain attempts of envy crawling in the dust—envy not occasioned by wrath at merit itself, but at the splendid fruits of it—so Gunnar smiled at Olle, cracked his whip at the gay young Bläsa for being so silly as to be frightened at Olle's tricks, and continued his drive to the church, not displeased with the amazement that was excited, and the ad-

miring glances which were directed to the brisk horse and the newly painted cart.

A consciousness of his own worth and his own ability began strangely to awake within Gunnar's mind. He began to discover that he was superior to his connections in manifold ways, and a desire arose within him to rise above them in every thing. In Gunnar many glorious natural endowments lay buried, which never could see the light, and his soul was, perhaps, one of the strongest instruments of genius, of profound investigation, of science and statesmancraft, of which every chord, every tone, was clear and pure, although fate had never struck them. But when the storm raged around Gunnar's soul—when the dead calm of every-day life and the tide of petty cares ceased—when powerful emotions and sufferings urged on the wheel of the heart, then was heard the sound of that stringed instrument's tones, like those irregular, ærial, chaotic sounds which proceed from the Æolian harp.

"It would be a good thing, mother-in-law, if you would sweep out the room before mid-day; but, look you, you must go quickly about it, for it will soon be twelve o'clock."

Thus sate Lena continually, and issued her commands on that mild May morning; for, with all her ugly failings, Lena was, in the highest degree, an orderly, clean, prudent, and clever mistress of a house, who never neglected any thing, who always did more than any other two. Her annoyance was now great in being compelled to sit still, bound, as it were, to her chair, because she had trodden upon a nail, which had inflamed her foot, as well as by seeing the kind, good, but mild and slow, Mother Ingrid doing all her work; nor can we so entirely condemn her feelings, nor yet the little *mauvais humeur* which arose in consequence, though we must deplore that Lena was not able to conceal it, as well as some other things; for Lena was, in her way, notwithstanding all her violence, a mistress in dissimulation when she had any thing to gain by it. Hence it happened that she very seldom was snappish at Mother Ingrid when Gunnar was present, but so much the more so in his absence, precisely because she knew that Mother Ingrid, with her excellent heart, would never at any time complain or tittle-tattle. And Mother Ingrid never did so, not only from the real excellence of her heart, but from the wish, to which all her prayers tended, that as much happiness, or at least as little unhappiness, as possible might befall her Gunnar in this mar-

riage, which Mother Ingrid had, at two different times, set herself, in opposition to circumstances, to compel and to demand.

"Bring here the potatoes, that I may peel them, while you make up the fire to roast them by," said Lena; but the next moment, turning suddenly to the window, she exclaimed, "Mother-in-law, look, in a minute, who it is that is riding so boldly! Can it be that deuced Abraham who is riding down to the water at that rate? He ought to have put the horse-cloth on, and that very carefully, for it is a great damage to a horse to take it warm down to water."

In the mean time Mother Ingrid had gone to the window, and stood there, somewhat amazed.

"Well, what are you stopping so long for? Was it Abra'm?" asked Lena.

"Oh, nay! it is a strange fellow, who is coming here, and is dismounting," replied Mother Ingrid.

"A stranger!" exclaimed Lena. "What does he look like?"

"He looks very grand," returned Mother Ingrid, and prepared to remove from the window, and pursue her work in the chimney-corner.

"Merciful Lord! what a cursed thing it is to be fastened down here as I am!" lamented Lena, impatiently. "What sort of a fellow is it? Go out, then, mother-in-law, and see what and who he is, and learn whether his business is with Gunnar or with me. Make haste!"

Mother Ingrid went out, and immediately returned with the equestrian messenger of ill-tidings, young Erik, who, after a very polite peasant's bow, with a grave and sorrowful countenance, announced to Lena her loss, dwelling still more particularly on Elin's sorrow and trouble, and her longing desire to see her sister and brother-in-law.

Lena let fall a few tears, but began immediately afterward to make inquiries about the effects which her mother had left behind, and now swore more than ever at the deuced nail which that fool Abra'm laid in her way, and which now would prevent her accompanying Gunnar to see to and take account of every thing. But as Lena was both cunning and quick in thought, she soon consoled herself with the reflection, that now Gunnar could, in her place, bring back Elin with him, and that three of them could not go with one horse all that long way,

and that it would be very convenient for them to have Elin through the summer, as Gunnar had undertaken Anderson's work, and they were thus compelled to find more women's day-work at the mowing and in the harvest; then they could do without hiring. Besides this, Elin was so quick with her hands, could help her with one thing and another, and did not look as if she would be a great eater. Lena thought of all these things while she talked to Erik about her native village, of which she did not remember a great deal, as well as giving to Mother Ingrid directions, in part loud, in part in a whisper, as to what was to be prepared for the stranger guest, to whom Lena wished to offer all imaginable cottage-comforts. *Per fas et nefas* had she, during her many years' service in gentlemen's houses, become possessed of divers things; she had also a few odd table-napkins, with the marking picked out, as well as a diaper table-cloth, which she allowed Mother Ingrid to lay upon the table in the middle window, for the handsome, spacious room had three, one on each side. Furthermore, she let her bring forth the best brandy which the house contained, butter, and cheese; besides which, Mother Ingrid brought a piece of meat and potatoes, as well as milk: for, in consequence of that work of Anderson's which Gunnar had undertaken, Lena had now three cows, and thus had a great deal of milk.

Just when the little meal was ready, the master of the house entered, with his game-bag much heavier than common. Gunnar had been in the woods ever since the dawn, and had been unusually successful. He had now brought with him a large wood-grouse and several blackcocks, so that he was in the best possible humor. He was at first most agreeably surprised to see the grand arrangement of the table and the guest, who was a perfect stranger; but singularly enough, his good-humor increased, if possible, with the news which Erik announced, and Gunnar had never been so ready to obey Lena's wishes as on this occasion. It was a very pardonable thing that he should not grieve about the death of his mother-in-law, whom he had never seen, and scarcely ever heard of, and that he should look forward with satisfaction to a time which would bring Elin under the same roof. It would also have been pardonable if the heart had beaten with quickened throbs at the mere thought—but it was really unpardonable of the heart, not of Gunnar, who as yet had not the least idea of it.

It belonged naturally to the proud character of Gunnar that

he should be a good host, and that he also was, whenever it was required.

"A health!" said he to the young Erik, wishing him to empty a silver bowl of pure, clear whisky, with the same relish as the weary, hungry, and thirsty hunter. Erik, however, excused himself, and said that he had "taken the temperance pledge." The two young men seated themselves one on each side of the table, leaving the women to take care of themselves, and allowing them afterward to eat quite unnoticed, each in her corner. Abraham also took his dinner by himself, upon his bed by the door, as was always customary.

"Yes, and it is true that you belong to the temperance people, and have taken the pledge? then I will certainly not press you to drink," said Gunnar, who regarded an oath as more sacred than any thing else. "I at one time thought myself of joining the teetotalers, but I didn't after all; for this was my way of reasoning, that I ought to have the sense to be temperate; and that brandy is one of God's gifts as well as any thing else of which the moderate use may do good, but that all those ought to renounce it, who either drink too much of it already, or who know in their own minds that they shall be unable to resist in the long run. For many years, as I have said, I never drank a drop, for I had, from certain causes, an abhorrence of brandy, although for myself I found it very agreeable; but now since I have become a steady man, and beyond this my own master, and am out so much both by day and night in the wood and upon the lake, I take a draught now and then, when I seem to want it, and I know that it strengthens the body and keeps up the spirits; but never, I trust, shall I become a drunkard, if nothing—if no great sorrow and adversity befall me, for then I would not answer for it."

Erik nodded approbation of Gunnar's words, and quietly smiling, wished that nothing might ever happen which should convert his host into a drunkard; as for himself, he said, he never thought about the matter; he never had any particular taste for brandy, but immediately adopted "the clergyman's proposition." "For, look you," said he, "he is a terrible Turk about this teetotalism, and draws into it both young and old, both men and women, and every body who is confirmed."

"In that case, then, Elin is a teetotaler," said Lena; and young Erik, whose countenance crimsoned, assured her that

nothing in this world would persuade Elin to let a drop of brandy pass her "small rosy lips."

Gunnar was silent, and crimsoned also.

The young men sat there, ate, and conversed, and were outwardly actual specimens of the most beautiful models of the Swedish peasantry. Gunnar was of lofty stature, slender and broad-chested at the same time; his whole exterior, his whole being, largely exhibited both outward and inward power. The eyes were of a deep-blue and of a resolute expression, the penetrating glances of which were softened by the long black eyelashes; the eyebrows were proudly arched; the nose, mouth, and chin, were finely formed; the forehead, lofty, broad, and smooth as a mirror; while the hair, of so dark a brown that it almost approached to black, lay in heavy and picturesque masses on each side of his countenance. It was a deep conviction of Gunnar's mind, that every person who adheres to his own class in life is far higher than he who apes the manners of another; and, therefore, he had always, even from his boyhood, had an especial aversion, not to the *gentleman*, but to the peasant who imitates the gentleman in any way, and nothing could have induced him to throw off his blue peasant's coat for a peasant's surtout, or, as Gunnar called it, "a gentry-surtout," or his long, luxuriant peasant-locks, for the closely-clipped head of the gentleman and the poor soldier of the present day. Gunnar, on the contrary, took the utmost care of his hair, as he did of his person generally; in part, because it was natural to him, and in part, as the result of Mother Ingrid's delicate sense of cleanliness and order; and this it was, perhaps, which contributed so much to the violent passion which he awoke in the heart of Lena, who, notwithstanding many other faults, yet never could endure any thing which was uncleanly and neglected.

Young Erik, on the other side, sat there with his fair hair, long also, but that was in consequence of his father's strict command that he should always wear it in the manner of the old Swedish yeoman—that is to say, parted on the forehead, and falling straight down over the ears. His eyes were of a lively and gentle expression, and of a blue as bright as that of the sky on a spring day. The coloring of his agreeable countenance was that of roses and milk, and made a strong contrast with Gunnar's brown cheek and dark whiskers. Whether Erik had eyebrows or not, one could not exactly say, because they

were so light in color that they could be merely seen in a bright light. He was nearly the head shorter than Gunnar, and looked as gay, sportive, open-hearted, and full of the enjoyment of life, as Gunnar, for some time past, had looked silent, reserved, and grave.

Gunnar was not by any means disinclined for the proposed journey, which it was now arranged by the young men should begin by the earliest dawn of the following day. Both Erik and his horse required this one day's rest, as he had ridden through the greater part of the night; and, for Gunnar, it was requisite that he should make several small arrangements for his absence. Abraham was immediately sent to Ma'msell Sara, who, strictly equitable and observant of the law in every thing else, had, nevertheless, the weakness of all country ladies, that of looking through their fingers at those sportsmen who shoot before the legalized time, and who gladly appropriate their booty to themselves, giving in exchange new and handsome bank-notes. This little service rendered by Ma'msell Sara was now to furnish the means for Gunnar's journey; and Lena, assisted by Mother Ingrid, prepared a good supply of eatables, which were stowed in Gunnar's blue chest, but as for the rest, it was Lena's desire that Gunnar should take nothing with him "which would lumber up the cart" in which Elin and her necessities were to be brought home.

"Dear," said Lena to Gunnar, who was unusually kind and obliging to her—"dear, as we two are now alone for a little while, while mother-in-law is milking and Erik is looking after his horse, I will beg one or two things of thee: look well after Elin, and see that she does not keep any of the household goods for herself, but that they are all sold and go into the general amount, and that is the opinion of Erik's father, Anders Nilson. But, look you, *it is necessary* that you have an eye upon Elin, because she will, assuredly, become avaricious and selfish on this occasion—that every body can believe."

Gunnar, who had just before been in so good a humor, even toward Lena, now grew angry; his eyebrows contracted, but he made no reply, although he felt a great inclination to speak openly in defense of Elin. He now went his way, however, without giving her any answer; and the cunning Lena mistook him this time, for she regarded his silence as an assent, and was greatly satisfied.

At the very earliest dawn of day, the two young men seated

themselves in the newly-painted cart, before which Bläsa trotted with Erik's Brunte fastened loosely beside it. It was quite a handsome turn-out. The two young travelers had agreed to journey in this way together, and, also, that every time they baited the horses, these should take turn and turn about, and thus alternately draw the carriage and trot on beside it.

When Abraham had been sent to the Hall with the game, he had also been commissioned with a little private message to Bengt, that he should meet Gunnar by day-break at the place where the two roads meet. But as Abraham could not keep silence before Olle, about all the wonderful things which had happened, and which were going to happen, so now Bengt did not betake himself alone to the appointed place; Olle also went, and was marching about at the junction of the roads, when Gunnar and Erik drove rapidly up. Gunnar immediately became angry.

"What the deuce must you bring that wretch with you for?" said he to Bengt, in an undertone, as they pulled up, and while Olle was vainly attempting to frighten the horses, and shake to pieces the cart.

"It was that chattering Abra'm's fault," returned Bengt.

"Yes, I'll pay him for it," said Gunnar, and ground his teeth. He then gave Bengt a few small commissions regarding that same Anderson, whose farm-work he had undertaken, and, besides that, prayed Bengt to do him one or two other little services, which Bengt was heartily willing to undertake. All this while Olle was screaming at the highest pitch of his voice—

"And so-o, you are going, I hear, to fetch a young lass! That is fine! Yes, that, I fancy, will suit you! Now, you'll have to ask me soon and often to go and see you at Vika, for I think a monstrous deal about her, Ellika, or whatever she is called, and I got a kiss of her when we parted at Christmas, and—"

"That is a cursed lie, like every thing you say!" interrupted Gunnar; "she no more gave you a kiss than she ate the sow that goes round the corner of the dike. Farewell, Bengt! Thanks and honor to thee for what thou hast promised to do for me. Let the cart alone, Olle, else I'll lash you with the whip right across your face! Ho! Bläsa!"

Olle retreated, but continued to shout after him the same words as long as Gunnar could hear him.

"What sort of a fellow is that?" asked Erik, when they were at about a hundred yards' distance from Bengt and Olle.

"Which of them?" inquired Gunnar.

"Bless me! that one that bawled and behaved so horribly; as to the other, he looked like a good sort of fellow enough."

"Ay," replied Gunnar, jealously and angrily at the same time; "that is a cursed wretch with whom I lived in service for two years, but whom I never could bring myself to bear. And it is horribly stupid of me, because, by rights, a good fellow ought never to be angry with such a creature; but I can never keep myself within bounds when I see him, for he enrages me by every possible way and means. And he is a drunkard as well, and a wicked man in every way."

"Now, he ought to join the teetotalers," remarked Erik.

"Oh, nonsense!" replied Gunnar, "for then he would certainly do as old Olaus of Kärreboda, who promised, with his hand upon the Bible, that he never would *drink* brandy, but, see you, he *ate* brandy with a spoon as much as he chose. And so it would be with Olle; for there is nothing but guile and deceit in his whole body, and oaths and promises are to him like so much snuff. No, he is a regular Judas, with a red wig."

"You don't like him," said Erik, smiling.

"Nay, I have as great a loathing to him as man can have."

"Well, but if he should follow after Elin, and should be intrusive and insolent, as he said?" asked Erik, a little uneasily and hot about the ears.

"Oh, the wretch! that shall he not!" replied Gunnar; "it shall be my fault if he do not let her alone. I believe he'll never dare to come to Vika, and if he were to poke his nose in there, I'd give him such a flogging with a whip as should satisfy him."

"Yes, that would be right," exclaimed Erik, breathing freely, and never suspecting that he had a far more dangerous rival much nearer to him.

The two young men talked on a variety of subjects during the journey. Great confidence had been placed in Gunnar with respect to taking journeys and executing business, and he had in this manner, as well as in consequence of his innate desire for information, much local knowledge within the district where he had merely traveled once; and he would with tolerable accuracy tell about what lay north and south, east and

west, as well as *up there, down there, and out there*, and pointed out with the handle of his whip all the remarkable objects by which they drove, as well as described them in his own way to Erik.

"There, do you see," said he, "Korsberga church on yonder hill? There is a very fine tomb there, you must know, in which lie eleven persons of the name of Fältstjerna (field stars), and you'll never find in that family more than that self-same eleven, and in their coat-of-arms they have eleven stars; and he who was the founder of the family went out into the war as a simple trooper to Karstorp, but he returned home as a captain of horse and a nobleman."*

"Yes, that might very well be," said Erik.

"Oh, yes, certainly, in its way," returned Gunnar; "but I can not exactly understand how a man can be a better fellow because he has a fine name given him, and is called a nobleman. And yet for all that it would be agreeable enough," added he, after a short reflection; "because if one were a devilish good and clever fellow, in all respects, it would have its bright side, thus at once to take precedence of every body else, and that one's children—" here he suddenly checked himself.

"Well," said Erik, "that one's children?"

"Ay," returned Gunnar, more slowly and with less enthusiasm, or, rather, with a certain melancholy in his tone, "that they had their father's example, and that every time they heard their grand new name, it should come into their remembrance that they should be excellent men like their father. Ay, ay; then it would not be any thing so monstrously stupid. But, look ye, those only who *actually* deserved it should be distinguished, and it should be the downright noble fellows to whom every body would take off their hats, and not a set of scamps and villains who now carry themselves so arrogantly, and are called *gentlemen*, only because they have property, and are able to commit robberies with their money, partly by injustice, partly by the sweat and toil of the poor. Psha!" said Gunnar, with disgust, "I can not endure such gentlemen, whose whole dignity consists in their coats and their money-bags. No, a good peasant is far, far before such, and therefore as I can never be a nobleman nor a priest—Heaven knows, since I never went

* A fact. (Author's note.)

to school—therefore I am, and will continue to be, a peasant all my days, and I will not have any thing on my grave but ‘honest and of good understanding,’ and this I will deserve.”

Thus did Gunnar converse with Erik ; but amid these more grave subjects another was frequently introduced, now called forth by one, and now by the other traveler, and sometimes by both—namely, Elin. When the conversation turned upon her, Erik became talkative, praised her incredibly, and extolled her above the skies, but still never ventured to say, what he had resolutely determined within himself, and that was, that should he even have to wait for his father’s death, nobody but Elin should ever become his wife.

Gunnar was more taciturn on the subject of Elin, but he listened with all the more attention, and sighed imperceptibly when he compared all the merits and the good qualities of his young sister-in-law with all the ugly faults which, day by day, revealed themselves in Lena, and which made her still more and more abhorrent in his eyes.

CHAPTER XX.

By noon of the following day, the two travelers arrived at the end of their journey. A day and a half had been occupied by it, although it was not much more than seven (Swedish) miles, but we must bear in mind they were not two of our young lieutenants, who fly with the wings of post-horses and whipcord, but two young peasants and farm-workers, who traveled with their own horses, and about their own business, although their burning desire to arrive at the end of their journey could match itself against that of our lieutenants, which is often small enough in comparison with the rapid flight which they so much love in general.

Gunnar and Erik first put up their horses, and gave them something to amuse themselves with, and then entered Father Anders’ large, well-to-do peasant’s house, in which Elin sat alone, sewing some piece of mourning against the funeral. She was not now the blooming, merry, lively, dancing maiden, who at the wedding, a year and a half before, had delighted all

eyes, and constituted the single point of light in Gunnar's remembrance of this wedding. Now she was the daughter, pale with weeping and sorrow, but as perfectly lovely and agreeable. She sat there, looking so neat and elegant, in a black every-day dress, with a little snow-white kerchief on her shoulders, and her light-brown hair braided closely and smoothly on her temples, and fastened up behind in a thick and glossy plait, much in the style of our most elegant ladies—(N.B., if they have any to fasten up).

She arose hastily, and went toward Gunnar; extended to him her hand, and burst into tears. She thanked him for having come; thanked Erik heartily for the great trouble he had taken, and was much grieved that Lena was prevented from coming by such a sad accident.

"Oh, yes," said she, warmly, and in an under voice to Gunnar, "all my hope and trust is in you, dearest brother and sister, for I have now no other support in the whole world."

Elin spoke thus, because she knew very well that it was only new, during her first period of sorrow, that she was invited to spend a few days at Father Anders', and she estimated both Father Anders himself, and the dextrous but yet simple Mother Karen, according to their full value; but she knew sufficiently well that in the end they would do nothing for her; and, as regarded the son Erik, she was much attached to him as the friend and playmate of her childhood, but she never thought any thing about him when she did not see him; his image did not stand forth with any particularly bright coloring in her mirror of the future; and she thus made a sufficiently ill return for the honest and ardent tone of Erik.

Gunnar did not say much. He felt too deeply for that; but he entered with Father Anders into the various circumstances which connected the little and now deserted dwelling, where, after the interment had taken place, an inventory should be made of the property while Gunnar was there; and this Father Anders promised to put up to auction, as well as to conduct the sale himself, because he was the most esteemed auctioneer in the whole town, or the district.

Toward evening an elderly peasant-woman came in and whispered some words to Elin. Elin again began to weep, nevertheless did not leave Gunnar, but, on the contrary, asked him if he had any inclination to accompany her down to the house of her deceased mother, and to see the features of the

departed before the coffin-lid was fastened down, as the dead, according to the account of the woman who had shrouded her, was not at all changed.

Gunnar accepted the proposal immediately, and took his young sister-in-law by the hand, took that small peasant-hand firmly into his own, and accompanied her through the pretty and neat little town.

"Oh! how many a time have I walked and run along here, both in joy and sorrow!" sobbed Elin, "and now, perhaps, it is for the last time that I am going down to the pretty little house, which you can see there among the blooming cherry-trees. Ah! what happy days have I not spent there! and now, what will be my fate?"

"Thou shalt live with us—thou and we will live happily," replied Gunnar, and pressed her hand firmly.

Elin returned his hand-pressure, but not his words, for they were now at the door of that little house where Elin was born, and had lived twenty years of happy childhood and youth. She wept much when they went into the little entrance, and then opened a door to the left, where a large room, or the so-called house-place, was situated. In the middle of this room stood the open coffin. Elin started back, and let go Gunnar's hand; but afterward recovering courage, she soon led the way, and conducted him to the beloved corpse, over which the last beams of the evening sun, trembling through the waving leaves of the cherry-trees which wreathed the window, cast a beautiful light—a marvelous radiance.

"Ah! she lies there just as when she was alive!" sobbed Elin; "see how beautiful and how good she looks. Oh! it is exactly as if she were going to speak. Look, she has not a single gray hair; and how like she is to Lena about the mouth. Dost thou not think so, dear Gunnar?" (Gunnar made no reply.) "Ah! my God! that death can thus come and put an end to the life of an excellent being. And *she* lived only to make people happy and do them good."

After this Elin remained some time standing in silence by her mother's side, but at length she went away to some flowers which stood in the window, broke a little rosebud, as well as a few sprigs of blossoming geranium, placed them in her mother's hand, kissed her forehead, and then said softly, weeping the while—

"Now, Gunnar, we will go."

Yet, once more she threw herself down by the coffin; and now it was Gunnar who compelled her to act the reasonable and prudent part; he lifted her up softly from the floor, pressed her closely to his throbbing heart, and said—

“Do not weep so, my good, dear Elin! I will be to thee both brother and friend, and—”

He could say no more. His full heart felt more than it had words to express. He carried Elin out into the entrance-room.

“Thanks, dear Gunnar,” she then said; “let me be; I shall now indeed be rational again.”

When, however, they had gone out through the little entrance door, she suddenly stopped.

“Ah,” said she, “perhaps I shall never come hither again while it looks as it has done, because after the funeral every thing will be cleared away! I will just once more take a peep into my little summer chamber, which mother always let me have for myself through the whole summer, as long as one could do without fire.”

With this she opened the door in the middle of the entrance, and conducted Gunnar into a little room so neatly and elegantly arranged, that no young lady could have one much more so, although the habitation itself was old and poor. There stood in the window pots in which were growing many kinds of flowers; above these hung a cage containing a little warbling linnet, and before the window stood a table, the drawers of which were locked. Outside the window ran a clear brook, among cherry-trees, and close beside it a little flower-garden, which had constituted Elin’s delight and pride, and upon which she had spent many an hour and many a thought. She opened the window, sighed, and looked down upon the fresh flowers; looked up to the blossoming trees, and again down to the clear little rapid brook; gazed upon all these with melancholy and tearful glances, but said nothing; she afterward looked round the room, but fixed her eyes again thoughtfully on the window and all it contained.

“Ah, in that window said she, “I had all the little which was dear to me! and now, perhaps, I shall never more see these trifles!”

“And why not?” said Gunnar; “why should you not see them again?”

“Oh, heavens!” said Elin; “how can I take with me my

little bird, my flower-pots, and my little table, which would sell so well?"

"What's the use of selling them?" asked Gunnar again; "and if you would like to have them altogether with you on the journey, why should you not? On the contrary, they can go exceedingly well."

"But then I have a little chest besides," said Elin.

"Well, yes, that will stand behind in the cart, and then you can have the table beside you, and we can set the flower-pots as we can, and the cage with the little bird you can hold on your knee."

"But then, how will you manage to drive?" inquired Elin, well pleased at Gunnar's proposal.

"Oh, I shall manage well enough!" replied Gunnar, and laughed so charmingly; "I have walked beside a cart many a time before now, and carried a load heavier and worse to carry than *that*. Don't trouble yourself about it; you shall have all your little property with you, that I answer for, and it will go capitally."

Elin thanked Gunnar with all her heart; and in order that she might have all her little possessions in one place, they determined immediately to carry them down with them to "Father Anders'," where her chest was already. Gunnar took the table, a little footstool, and a myrtle in a pot. Elin took the birdcage, her beautiful London Bible, and some other devotional books which she had upon a little shelf, together with such small flower-pots as she set most value on; and, thus burdened, they returned to Father Anders' house, after that Elin had cast a long and sorrowful glance at the door which led into the room where lay the last remains of her beloved mother. On their way they met Erik, who was glad to help Elin with the whole of her load, with the exception of the birdcage.

"That you may carry yourself," said Erik, who wished to enliven her; "for I will not go and carry that ugly little thing which cost you so many tears."

"How was that?" inquired Gunnar, who felt an extraordinary interest for every thing which concerned Elin.

"Why," replied Erik, "I caught the little bird, and gave it to Elin, with the cage and the fountain and all; but God knows how it was! the window stood open, and the cage in it open too, so the bird flew out, and was away for a day and a half,

and Elin cried all day and all night, and the next day I had the good luck to catch him again and entice him into the cage; but Elin would not believe that it was the same before she actually saw that it was, and that he came and took hemp seed from her lips; then she believed it was hers, and it made her happy again."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE interment took place with silence and solemnity, because Elin's mother had been universally beloved; and every one revered Elin's sorrow. There was scarcely any who did not say, "Look what a handsome and agreeable brother-in-law Elin has got! He looks much more fitted for her than for that cat-like Lena, for she was as bad a piece of goods as ever grew up. God grant that she may behave well to her sister-in-law! Yet the brother-in-law is a fine fellow, that one can see plain enough!"

The inventory was made out; and Elin left all to Gunnar and Father Anders' pleasure, that they might do just what they thought best. She wept much at parting from her friends and the place of her birth; and also when, at the commencement of the journey, they drove past the churchyard where her mother lay interred, and where the newly-cut, green turf pointed out the spot, she covered her face with her hands, and wept bitterly.

"Ah, do not weep so, my dear, sweet Elin!" said Gunnar, who now felt it was his duty to console her. "Thou wilt ruin thy lovely eyes, and make thy head ache, and then I shall be so distressed."

This last argument operated most. Elin endeavored to put a restraint upon her emotions, and she succeeded; and before long, if she were not exactly cheerful, still she was most kind and conversable.

The two travelers talked a great deal about the future; and already might any observant person have perceived how in these conversations they thought much more about each other than of themselves. Elin said that she had not the slightest inclination to take a service, but would much rather remain

with her sister, and live with her as a maid-servant, considering that they must have one, it being necessary on account of Anderson's work. Gunnar represented to Elin that she, who had never done any thing but sew, and spin, and weave, and such-like sedentary employments, would find it very difficult to have to go into the cow-house, and to make herself useful in the meadows and fields, to gather twigs, to thrash, etc. Elin, however, said that she would attempt to do all this, and declared that she ought to learn to do them, for that she was turned twenty; and she concluded by laughing, and saying—

"How should I ever manage, if I should any time become my own mistress?"

A pang went through Gunnar's heart at these words. He called to mind Erik's parting from Elin. How he had shed tears, and accompanied them along the road; how he had caressed and embraced Elin, and how she, on her side, was friendly toward him both now at parting, and many another time during the day. Gunnar was silent for a long while; at length he said, with a certain effort:

"Ay, ay, Elin dear. Thou think'st a good deal about that Erik, and Erik, too—that I can very well understand—why not?"

Elin looked at him with her clear blue eyes, and Gunnar looked at her with his dark eyes. They bewildered themselves for a moment in each other's glances; and their hearts beat quicker, and their cheeks glowed with a deeper crimson, but neither of them knew why.

The journey was not a rapid one. Gunnar had no longings for his home, and seemed, therefore, to have great doubts about Blåsa. Singularly long silences often succeeded to earnest and animated conversation. Gunnar and Elin felt themselves for a while unspeakably happy, and then again—as if they were in want of something, but they looked one upon the other, and then—all want seemed supplied.

"But," said Elin, after a silence of an unusual length, "thou never think'st about your little Gustaf. It seems to me that it will be so delightful to see him and to play with him. Is he a sweet little child? Is he like thee or like Lena? He ought to be like thee as he is a boy, for thou"—but she did not finish the sentence.

"Oh, yes, the lad is a nice child; there is no fault to find with him." Having said thus much, Gunnar talked about something else.

They had to spend the night at the house of a peasant with whom Gunnar was acquainted; there they seemed to be most heartily welcome, for Gunnar was beloved every where, and Elin became so the moment any one saw her. The kind and affable peasant-wife set before them the best she was able, and showed them in the evening into a pretty double-bedded room, where they were to pass the night, wishing them as she went out "a pleasant night's rest." Elin sat down for a moment considering, and then said with great simplicity,

"Dost thou know, Gunnar, thou must certainly go out and find another sleeping-place for thyself, that I may have this room; for I never can accustom myself to sleep in the same room with a man. I have never yet done it, although I know well enough that it is the universal custom among the peasantry."

Gunnar left the room. And, however weary and sleepy he might be, for he had walked nearly the whole of the day, and that keeping up with Bläsa the whole time, yet still he lay pondering on various things before he went to sleep. In their sitting-room at Vika, there were two "curtained beds," as they were called, to which there were handsome blue-striped hangings, which had been woven by Lena, and trimmed with white linen fringe, the remnants of the weaving, which she had collected during her years of service. One of these belonged, as a matter of course, to the husband and wife, and in the other slept Mother Ingrid, and where also, Gunnar had always heard, "the new servant-girl," whom they were to take in the autumn, was to sleep. Away by the door stood the wooden press-bed, where Abraham sat every evening, and out of which he turned every morning. Thus was it, but how was it now to be? Gunnar, at first, could not at all discover how they were to manage, but he thought a deal about it. Where was Elin to sleep, "who would not sleep in the same room with the men-folk," which was otherwise so extremely usual among the peasantry in Sweden, where the houses contain seldom more than one common room for all purposes.

"Hist!" a light flashed upon Gunnar's mind. Could not Elin have that small wardrobe-chamber, which was of so trifling a use, and in which there was even a little fire-place. They lived also in the middle of the wood; and when winter came, he would take care that she had fuel to burn; there was no danger of that, even though he himself might have to cut it at

night. He fancied that he could do *every thing* for Elin, at this moment; he had, nevertheless, a presentiment that Lena would not do any thing which did not promote her own interest; and he had an instinctive feeling that, as regarded her, it would be better to go to work in a diplomatic sort of way than to attack her directly. Besides this, he hoped that the old proverb would be true which says, that blood is thicker than water; and, therefore, that Lena would make an exception as 'regarded Elin, in her constantly selfish mode of proceeding.

Gunnar went to sleep late, and awoke early. Life was again worth living for. When Gunnar was dressed, he went out in the first place to look after his horse, and, after that, he took a turn round the house in which Elin slept, and could not possibly resist the temptation, whether he would or not, of casting an inquiring glance toward the window, where he knew, of a certainty, that she was. How astonished he was, then, to see her standing, already dressed, and smiling at him through the open window, bidding him good morning, but giving him, at the same time, a warning sign with her finger, when he was about to utter aloud his joyful surprise.

"Hist! then," said she. "Do not let us wake our excellent host and hostess; but if you are impatient to set off, we can do so easily, without waiting till they wake, or without breakfast; for when we rest a little we can refresh ourselves from our store of provisions."

"Oh, nonsense!" replied Gunnar, who had quite another design; "we need not be in such a desperate hurry. The horse requires time both to eat and to rest, and it will be much better for us to drive a little quicker. And you, dear Elin, you require some good coffee before we set off; and that I know we shall get from Mother Britta, where we are. And I, too, can do very well with a good warm breakfast. No, we need not hurry so very much; but now, do you come out for a little while, that we may take a walk, and look about us this glorious and lovely summer morning."

Elin did not see any thing objectionable in Gunnar's proposal; she threw, therefore, her black shawl over her head, and stole softly out of the house to him. Hand in hand went they around the peasants' fields, which were particularly beautiful and pleasant, and, at length, came up to the top of a steep hill, from which they had a most extensive and beautiful view. This

little farm, where they had passed the night, lay at the extremity of the lofty, beautiful, and wood-covered mountain of Billing, which elevates itself in the midst of the most lovely and fertile plains of West Gothland, like an immense giant, green almost to its very summit, and blue, and bluer still, the farther one removes from it.

"Oh! I never before saw such a beautiful and grand prospect!" said Elin, and pressed Gunnar's hand.

"Yes," replied Gunnar, who was bewildered with the view of the unrivaled landscape which lay below him. "Yes, I always seem to lose my breath when I see this fine plain, which, after all, is certainly not a plain, when we come to it, although it now looks like one, with all its churches, and towns, and gentlemen's seats; and see, there, Elin dear, there are the two church towers of Skara; and look, there is Kinne hill, so beautiful, and round, and dark-blue; and that light-blue stripe down there, which glances so in the morning sun, that is the Venner lake. It is a great lake, thou mayest believe; but not so inconceivably beautiful and bright as the Vetter lake; for there it is only fresh water. Hast thou ever been on 'the hill,' dear Elin?" (Elin shook her little head by way of negative.) "Then, some Sunday, this summer, we will drive there, thou and I, if we go nowhere else, for *that* thou shalt see. It is really the finest thing any body can see, I think. There thou wilt see the great lake lying just like the plain here before thee, and glancing and shining like thy hair, or else foaming and whirling, and of a gray-blue color, as if it were enraged like an evil beast. And then thou shalt see Leckö Castle, which lies out in the lake like a gray goose on the waters. Thou mayest trust me, all these are most remarkable, when they are seen, although it sounds almost stupid when one describes them. I lived in service a year on the hill, before I was 'confirmed,' and I never shall forget how strangely the lake affected me sometimes. Yes, do you know, Elin dear, it was just as if the mermaid, or the neck, had decoyed me to her, and I shut my eyes many times when I stood upon the shore of the lake, that the water-spirits might not have power over me, and drag me to the bottom; for I had an indescribable desire to throw myself in, and thus, perhaps, I might have remained there with them."

"Yes, but then thou canst swim like an eel," observed Elin, and held Gunnar all the firmer, as if she feared lest this sin-

sprite could come even through the air, and carry away Gunnar before her eyes, to "the narrow and shining stripe."

"Oh, yes, I can swim," replied Gunnar; "but what would that avail against the mermaid, if she *would*?"

"What dost thou fancy that she looks like?" asked Elin.

"Oh," replied Gunnar, "she is certainly handsome, like thee."

"Fie!" exclaimed Elin, laughing, "that thou should compare me to a witch!" and, with that, she gave Gunnar a little blow with her hand; and Gunnar took her hastily round the waist, and drew her to him. Elin, however, as hastily escaped from him, and said gayly and kindly,

"Nay, come now, Gunnar, otherwise they may fancy that we have run away from them when they wake."

"Yes, and left the horse and cart, and all the things," observed Gunnar, somewhat annoyed, for he had no idea of returning. He was now too much excited by what he had seen, what he heard, and what he remembered. The past days of his childhood stood so vividly before him in this beautiful sun-illuminated present, that it was a vexation for which Gunnar was not rightly prepared to have to descend again to every-day life, with all its petty cares, some of them, it is true, not more than an inch in size, but, on the contrary, of many hundred pounds weight. Still, however, these were not so *just now*; they were all as light as feathers, and hardly an inch in size; and Gunnar followed Elin almost like a shadow.

During the rest of their journey they conversed incessantly. When one person willingly talks, and another person still more willingly listens, then may the conversation be called lively; and few things will bear any comparison in delight with a lively conversation between two persons suitable for each other; it is like the divided apple, of which each side bears a different color.

Toward afternoon the travelers found that, notwithstanding the good feed which the horse had in the morning, the slower he went the nearer he approached the end of his journey. When the old "gentleman's seat," the old gray "nest," that Grantorp, which might tell us so much about ancient times if it could talk about such things—when this old house came into view, Elin exclaimed,

"Look, there is the great stone Hall! Never did I see such a large house! And it is only of stone. Bless me! how

mysterious and gloomy I thought it was in the winter, a year ago, and now it looks almost cheerful. Look how beautiful and grand it is, standing there in the midst of the woods just bursting into leaf! The squire asked me whether I would not come and live in the family as housemaid in the place of Lena; but I could not then have done it for half the world, and that for many reasons," added she, sighing deeply; "but now, you see," continued she, in a livelier tone, "it might do very well."

"Oh, no, no! In the name of Jesus, shall it never be, Elin?" said Gunnar, and became deathly pale at the mere thought. "No—promise me that. Swear to me, Elin, that you never—no never, in all your days—will enter into that robber's den."

"Bless me! but why dost thou speak thus of such an excellent place, with such a good family?" said Elin, a little indignantly and reproachfully.

"Ay, I know very well why," muttered Gunnar, half aloud, and became gloomy and silent. Elin questioned him no further on the subject. She already thought of something else.

But now they turned off from the great high road, leaving Grantorp to the right, and traveled on by a narrow path through a deep wood. This path wound beautifully among the gigantic growth of firs and pines, and the evening air began to give that fragrance to the wood which is so agreeable, yes, so irresistibly delightful, to all dwellers in the woods. Gunnar, with his lips apart, the nostrils extended, and his head thrown back, inhaled large draughts of this glorious wood air.

"Oh, how delicious it tastes, after all the dust of the high-road!" said he, and looked up to the tree tops, as if he were observant of some bird. He then looked down to Elin, who was unobservedly wiping away a tear from her eye.

"Ah, do not weep thus, heart's dear Elin!" besought Gunnar. "Thy hot tears always burn me. I think thou art so much to be pitied. Only rely on *my* power; thou shalt be well off with us, and never shalt repent the day thou set'st foot on our door."

"Yes, God grant it!" sobbed Elin.

God himself knows best whether at this moment he sent a presentiment to Elin, or a warning, or both; but she wept bitterly, and Gunnar hardly drove at a foot's pace.

"Now, cheer up, Elin dear," said he at length. "The road winds round a very little to the left, and then thou canst see both the lake and Vika, and our meadow, and our wood, and the new boat which I bought at the midsummer fair, and every thing which we have."

"Bless me! may I go out in the boat?" asked Elin, with all the gladness of a child, and dried her tears.

Gunnar, extremely delighted, took her hand, and stroked his cheek with it, and pressing it warmly at the same time, he said,

"Yes, yes; thou shalt go in the boat! Thou shalt sit and sing one of those lovely old songs, which thou singest so well, and I will row thee far out into the lake, on some beautiful and calm evening. And then thou shalt go out with me to lay the long lines; and early, by break of day, thou and I will go out and examine the nets, before the sun is up. Asch! what delightful sails we will have!"

With this he gave the horse an animating little cut with the whip; and look, now—now there lay spread out before their eyes, the beautiful lake, bright as a mirror, surrounded by grassy meadows and hills covered with wood. Upon the nearest shore lay the beautiful little farm of Vika, which had probably derived its name from a long, narrow headland, wooded with birches and alders, which, running into the lake, formed a creek (vik), and upon this headland the house of Vika was built. This headland constituted the finest pasturage land on the farm; and at this time a few cows and sheep were grazing among the trees, and thus giving beauty to the scene. The house itself was entirely new-built, unusually lofty, large, and neat, for a farm-cottage. The barns and farm-buildings also looked new and flourishing. The whole place, indeed, had a pleasant and comfortable appearance, with its little garden, in which were green shrubs, and blossoming fruit, and cherry-trees. Just across the lake might be seen a church, and several farm-houses, with their shining red-tiled roofs. The picture thus represented was one of unusual beauty, seen in the light of the descending sun, which at that time seems always to cast a twofold splendor over the earth, as if she would that this, her child, should miss her, should wish for her during the darkness of night, and not forget her for the moon and the thousand stars, whose delights she seems to envy.

Thus does graceful woman often fly from the glances and

blandishments of man, and precisely at the last moment of her tarrying, heightening her powers of fascination, that she may leave behind her that sun-bright memory which may defy every dangerous rival. Do you not recognize yourselves, you good and beautiful ones, who, even in this, resemble your glorious symbol—the sun?

“Oh! how beautiful! how beautiful!” exclaimed Elin, and Gunnar’s passionate glances seemed almost to devour the words from her lips. He felt himself, at this moment, to be inexpressibly happy, because it was Elin whom he had conducted here, and because it was to his home, “and to *her* home,” that he had brought her. He could have kissed the very earth, so lovely did it seem to him at that moment. But we, ah! we will weep, because we seem to hear those unhappy words breathed through empty space, those words of a suffering human being, who had learned too truly the uncertainty of all earthly happiness.

“Know, smiler! at thy peril art thou pleased;
Thy pleasure is the promise of thy pain.
Misfortune, like a creditor secure,
But rises in demand for her delay;
She makes a scourge of past prosperity
To sting thee more, and double thy distress!”

Thus exclaimed Young, some time in his dark nightly despair; and *where* can be found the happy mortal who has not, sooner or later, chimed in with his sorrowful lament?

“Welcome, dearest Elin,” said Lena, and dried her own eyes, although they were scarcely perceptibly moist; “but now we will have no crying,” added she, and that wisely enough, because it would have been difficult for her to shed tears now that she was not angry—for then she always cried.

Elin’s tears on the contrary, flowed abundantly; and she thought Lena, now, more than ever, like her deceased mother, except that her mother had looked far milder and kinder. Elin, however, did not say so; she spoke merely of the resemblance, which filled her with joy, and yet which caused her to weep.

Gunnar nodded at Lena, but afterwards hastened into the house to salute Mother Ingrid, who had not heard of the arrival of the travelers.

“Good day, fallé,”* said little Gustaf, in a clear, childish

* A familiar contraction of *far lille*, or dear father. (Author’s note.)

voice, and came bounding towards him so gladly and affectionately, that Gunnar felt a sad and oppressive feeling in his heart at not being able to clasp him in his arms, for at this moment he could willingly have embraced the whole universe—but not, however, this child, whom otherwise he would have loved as tenderly as his own. But with a heart like Gunnar's it was impossible, but that *notwithstanding*, and spite of *every thing*, he should feel a tenderness for this little child; sweet-tempered, good, and lovely as it was, and which grew up, day by day, under his own eyes.

"See, there's something for thee, poor little thing!" said Gunnar, and gave him on the spot a hard and dry biscuit which had been left at the funeral, and which had withstood all the disasters of the journey, commonly so destructive of every kind of pastry—and which had remained entire and unscathed in the pocket of his coat.

"Thanks, fallé," said the boy, and immediately began to nibble at the gift, whilst Gunnar patted him on the head.

"See, thou art a good lad, my Gunnar! and a thousand times welcome home," said Mother Ingrid, who alone had seen his behavior to the child, and she wiped away a tear, an actual tear, from her old eyes. Her son embraced her, and asked her how she had been for these many days.

In the mean time Lena and Elin had a little conversation together. Elin about the departed mother, and Lena about "the effects" which were left. Now, however, they had come into the neatly arranged sitting-room, the floor of which was scattered with fir-twigs.

"Oh! how nice you have every thing here!" said Elin, and looked round her with great delight. "What an exceedingly handsome, lofty, and spacious sitting-room you have!"

"Look, in that bed thou art to lie with mother-in-law," said Lena.

Elin and Gunnar exchanged glances.

"Oh, no!" said Gunnar, with great decision of tone, "I have faithfully promised Elin that she shall have the little chamber to herself, and there she shall sleep.

"Oh, it is impossible!" replied Lena, in a tone of some displeasure; "there is no bed, and we have no bed-clothes at all; and all our garments are hanging there, and—"

"Nonsense!" interrupted Gunnar, "I shall, some of these days, before the mowing begins, put together a nice little bed

—that I shall. I can have elm-wood enough, and mother has both a pillow and a quilt in her chest up in the garret, that I know, who helped to pack them up.”

“Yes, and Elin is heartily welcome to the loan of them,” said Mother Ingrid, who would much rather sleep alone in her bed, and who was at the same time kind-hearted, and glad to be helpful.

“Yes, but it is a great sin to wear them out,” said Lena, who immediately remembered that when Mother Ingrid died those things would belong to her.

“Oh, I shall not wear them out so very much,” said Elin beseechingly, and embraced Lena. Lena promised to give her consent, all the more, as she had it in her mind to get an infinite deal of assistance, and many a useful thing done, by the quick and dextrous Elin, though, at the same time, she should give her neither wages nor any thing else.

The evening was uncommonly agreeable, and Lena in the best of humors, more especially when she saw how little Gustaf nibbled at his biscuit, as well as that he had got it from “good fallé.” Elin took the child up in her arms, kissed him most affectionately, for he was both clean and sweet, as well as handsome.

“Ah! thou sweet little angel,” said she, “thou art as sweet as sugar! But I can’t make it out who he is like: it is neither Gunnar nor Lena.”

Lena busied herself assiduously at the cupboard, and seemed not to hear. Mother Ingrid looked down at her knitting, and Gunnar went out. Some time after, when he returned, they were talking about something else, and he again became happy and cheerful, happier and more cheerful than Lena and his mother had ever seen him since they had removed to Vika.

“And you have, besides, a farm-laborer!” said Elin, who was thinking over all the affairs of the family. “My word, but you have people enough to feed, and now you will have me besides.”

“That won’t make much difference,” replied Lena, “for thou art nothing of an eater in comparison with Abr’m.”

“Abraham is a magnificent fellow!” said Gunnar, wag-gishly, and glanced significantly at Lena and his mother, that they should not gainsay him. “He is now out doing day-labor at the Hall, I reckon,” continued Gunnar, in a jocular tone, and with difficulty keeping himself from laughing; “but

he will very soon be coming home, and *then*, Elin dear, *then* thou wilt see a monstrously handsome, and pleasant, and smart young fellow, just such a one as has taken thy fancy."

"Just such a one as has taken my fancy!" repeated Elin, rather indignantly, "I have taken a fancy, certainly, to nobody."

"Well, what of Erik, then?" returned Gunnar, and held up his finger in a merrily threatening manner.

"Yes, what of him, then?" replied Elin, and blushed a little.

"Ay, ay!" said Lena, laughing aloud. "Now we shall see our Abr'm pulling Erik Anderson's nose out of joint, let him be fine and rich as he may; for you may believe Abr'm is something of a *calvalier*, that is he!"

Lena had learned some fine words and phrases during her many years of service in various gentlemen's families, and she often made use of them when she was in a good humor: but she always mangled these words dreadfully, and Gunnar could never refrain from laughing at her, and imitating her.

"Yes, Heaven help me, exactly a true *calvalier*," said he; "fine and elegant as a doll, and quick, and clever, and nimble as a magpie, and intelligent, and—"

"Ah, you shall not make a fool of the poor fellow," said Mother Ingrid, smiling, but nevertheless with a grave manner; "he is to be sure moderately *schangteeler*, as Lena says, but he does his duty, and that doesn't consist in strutting and swaggering about like a turkey-cock, as you other young fellows at the Hall used to do, thou Gunnar even in former days, and Bengt, and Olle, and many another."

"Yes, look ye; they were altogether laboring-men at the Hall, and such as they always have a little more of the *petter-mätrar* in them," remarked Lena jocularly.

"If you'll take a look at the gentlemen's servants,

You'll see, though they're fine, they've no substance at all!"

sang Gunnar, in his clear, pure tenor, and looked waggishly at Elin.

"Well! that was a treat to hear Gunnar sing!" said Mother Ingrid; that I did not expect to hear for a year and a day."

Gunnar cast his eye up to the wall, where his dusty and unstrung violin was hanging by the side of his gun, and said,

"Now, how stupid it was of me not to have bought myself

some violin strings when we drove through Sköfödt, for either at Råberg's or Lagerstedt's I could have got them; but I can, after all, send for them very well from our own town, by the postman from the Hall, and that I will!" added he, with gay animation.

The evening was particularly delightful to every body. Elin took possession of her new apartment, and already thought how she would adorn it with curtains, and a little blind for the lower panes, that she might keep Gunnar and "that laborer" from peeping in. Gunnar assisted her in setting every thing in order; knocked in a hook for the bird's cage, the small inhabitant of which amused little Gustaf indescribably; he carried in her chest of drawers, her table, and the other small matters which they had brought with them. Lena looked at, and carefully examined, every thing, and inquired whether "the table and the bureau" were Elin's property *before* her mother's death, which Elin honestly declared to be the case. All the articles of clothing which had hitherto been hung in that room were carried up into the garret, and Gunnar promised that the next day he would drive in some hooks to hang them upon. They arranged a little temporary bed for Elin, scanty enough, it is true, but with which she was perfectly satisfied till better could be obtained.

When Abraham at length came home, Elin could not help laughing, because she had actually in part believed the description they had given her, or, at all events, she could not imagine to herself that she should see such an ill-favored, clumsy, crooked-legged, and mean-looking young man of twenty. His hair was rough and ill-kept, his clothes worn and neglected, and he seemed hardly gifted with half the intelligence of ordinary men, although he had double their capacity for eating. When Elin, however, had had her laugh out, there was an end of it; and from that day forth Abraham had *two* defenders, for Mother Ingrid had always done this against Lena, who was incessantly scolding and abusing "that *brute* Abr'm," and Gunnar, who often lost patience with his stupidity and want of sense. He was, nevertheless, a strong and clever laboring man, and as patient as he seemed to be; and was, besides that, as entirely devoted to Gunnar, as much so as is the so often ill-treated dog. Elin, however, thought to herself, "Good heavens! what a delightful thing it is to escape having to be always in the same room with such a one!"

CHAPTER XXII.

A SEASON of comfort and enjoyment now commenced. The summer sun seemed not only to shine through the unclouded and brilliant firmament, but into every heart beneath the low roof of the peasant's dwelling. Elin shed a few tears now and then, but every body tried to comfort and enliven her, and, if they are beloved who make these attempts, then are they mostly successful. Lena's foot was become well again, and she could now, therefore, go and look after every thing; and never had Gunnar been so kind to her and the boy as now, and never had he done so much work, or made such good bargains before. She was, therefore, in an especially good humor. Mother Ingrid was unusually free from the weakness in her chest during this warm, pleasant season of the year; and, besides this, she was made so happy by the general good temper that prevailed, and by her son's return to the light-heartedness of former days. Gunnar was now, at all events he often was, in tolerably good and cheerful spirits; he sung now and then at his work, although it almost always was in an under-tone; felt a new and extraordinary life within him, which diffused its powerful influence over all his undertakings. He attended industriously, and with much more zeal than he had formerly done, all his occupations; but the pleasure he took in homework prevented him from going out as much as formerly to the wood or upon the lake. He principally was engaged in a small shed, at work on "a neat little bedstead, which he was making for Elin," as well as just such a chair as she had in her former chamber, and a little "book-shelf." Elin often went out to him there, and watched his work going on with great pleasure: she always, by his desire, put aside his long hair from his face, because he was at work with "both his hands," and then heard him say, "Bless me! what a little hand! and how delicate and white, like a young lady's!" and, deeply crimsoning, she would draw away her hand from his lips.

Elin's usefulness in the family began the very day after her arrival, because Lena had "stuff" by her to make up; she had "stuff for a dress for Gustaf," and a "waistcoat-piece" to be

made up for Gunnar; and all these were to be done by Elin; and Elin did it, not only well, but quickly and with pleasure; besides this, she said that she must "of necessity endeavor to do" out-of-doors work in summer, for, without any preamble, she immediately confided to Lena, that it would be very repugnant to her feelings to go into any other service; and that she would much rather remain with her relatives, if she could only give them satisfaction, and do all that any ordinary servant-girl would do. Lena was perfectly well pleased with this proposal, and Gunnar—overjoyed, but he laughed, nevertheless, every time Elin talked about her future "out-of-doors work," until one time, when Elin really seemed a little hurt at it, and then he determined and fixed that when the great "hall-farm mowing" began, which was now just at hand, that Elin should go with them, and make an attempt at hay-making. In preparation for this time, Gunnar made for her a small rake of the very lightest kind of wood, and with so much delicate ornament about it, that little Gustaf believed it was a plaything for himself, and he cried terribly when they took it from him.

"Dear Gunnar," said Elin to him, when she saw the child's distress, "do make a little rake for little Gustaf."

"Oh, I don't trouble myself about it," replied Gunnar, looking gloomily.

"Oh, yes; do it for *my* sake!" said Elin.

And now, behold, Gunnar made a little rake for Gustaf; and Lena, and Mother Ingrid, and Elin, and, most of all, little Gustaf, were delighted at it.

Little Gustaf now spent most of his time with Elin in her own pleasant room, which was adorned like a doll's house, and where she sat and sewed, and by this means little Gustaf became gentler, cleaner, and dearer to Gunnar. Every body had found their advantage in Elin's arrival. She was the sun which diffused mild and warm beams around—beams so healing, so invigorating, and yet—which burned. Even Abraham seemed to have a feeling thereof. He might now be seen standing with his face bent down to the waters of the lake, that he might wash and adorn himself—an operation which Lena had hitherto insisted upon in vain, but it now was done without any admonition. He even now combed his hair on Sundays; and one day, during the allotted rest at noon, when Elin went out for a breath of fresh air down to the beautiful shore of the lake, she saw

Abraham sitting behind a bush, busy mending his working jacket, which was sadly out at the elbows.

"What are you doing, Abraham?" asked Elin, kindly, but with great difficulty to prevent herself from laughing to see how awkwardly he set about it.

"Oh!" replied Abraham, confused; "I was trying if I could not put a patch on my every-day jacket, that they should not laugh at me so."

"Give it here," said Elin, and took from him his work. "You can not do it, that I can see. I will help you. Now, do you go to my room—the key lies over the door; upon the table there stands my thimble, and the scissors and thread are there too; bring all these with you, and some pieces of blue woolen cloth which lie upon the chest of drawers."

Abraham immediately obeyed, and sprang up the hill joyfully, like "a nag galloping," as Gunnar always said of Abraham's movements; and, in the mean time, Elin undid all that Abraham had sewed. Abraham was back, with the speed of an arrow, and it was not long before his jacket was, at all events, *whole*, though we regret to say that we can not add *agreeable* also.

Abraham, who had never spoken during the whole time, wished very much to pat Elin when the jacket was finished, and attempted to do it, but Elin withdrew herself from his touch.

"Nay, fie, Abraham!" she said; "don't trouble yourself about that, but take all in good part. I will gladly help you any time when you will tell me, and if you will keep your hands off me."

After these words Elin went down to the shore of the lake, and, stripping up her sleeves, washed her hands and arms—washed also her thimble and scissors; and when she returned to her little room, put on a clean neckerchief and apron, because Abraham's jacket was very dirty.

In the mean time there beat, under this dirty jacket, a heart which hitherto had lain entirely torpid.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE hay-harvest was now just at hand ; and one evening, during supper, when they were all making merry about Elin, who felt that it was *necessary* that she should try her powers in this "out-of-doors work," Abraham, after some coughing and clearing his throat, lifted up his voice, a most unusual event, and said,

"Yes, I shall not mow so monstrous fast, and so she can keep with me, if she likes, and rake."

"You!" exclaimed Gunnar, enraged, and curled his upper lip, and contracted his eyebrows as aristocratically as any lord of the realm ; "you ! and do you think that Elin will go and rake after you ? No, don't think of such a thing. I shall mow myself, and you must stop and do something at home !"

Abraham was silent, and consoled himself with a dish of porridge. This change made Elin indescribably happy ; Lena also thought it was a good one ; but Mother Ingrid, like Abraham, remained silent, and what her thoughts were, God alone knows, who has himself given to woman's eyes, ears, and feelings, the ability to be sometimes almost omniscient. She heaved an inaudible sigh, and watched, from her dark corner, the beautiful countenances of Gunnar and Elin, which smiled so lovingly at each other, while, amid joke and talk, they ate out of the same dish, and fed little Gustaf with their spoons, while Lena was busied at the fire.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"THE great mowing will begin on Monday," said Abraham, one Saturday afternoon in July, when he came home from the work at the hall-farm ; "for so said both the inspector, and Overseer Anders ; so now you have got something to think about."

"Indeed !" said Gunnar ; "yes, and to-morrow we also go to

church, as we said, if it continues as beautiful weather as it is to-day. Mother and Lena can drive in the cart, if they like; and I and Elin shall go the direct road by the side of the lake."

"And who, then, is to look after the lad?" inquired Lena, rather snappishly.

"Abraham can do that," replied Gunnar.

"I can very well stop at home with little Gustaf," said Elin, "and then Abraham can go to church as well, for he has not been ever since I came here, I believe."

Nobody made any reply.

"Can not it be so?" inquired Elin, after a little silence.

"Oh," said Lena, heartlessly and coldly; "Abraham can not read, nor has he any Sunday clothes."

Elin looked astonished.

"Poor Abraham!" said she, at length, in the most compassionate tone, and went up to him. "Can you not read at all? then, indeed, you are not able to go to the Lord's Supper. Poor, poor lad!"

Abraham was silent, and looked down sorrowfully.

"Can not you read at all?" asked Elin, again with the utmost compassion.

"Oh, I can blunder out a little," replied Abraham.

"Listen, Abraham," returned Elin, in an under voice; "come with me into my little room, and let me hear what you can do."

And they two went out immediately.

Lena burst out into a loud horse-laugh.

"Let them be put to shame and perish," said she; "I believe on my soul that Elin will teach Abraham to read, which nobody else could, neither schoolmaster nor minister. It would be much better that she kept her reading skill out of sight, till little Gustaf begins, for that is what I never could do, for I never was so much given to reading as mother and Elin were. Look ye, Elin has read the Bible right through over and over, and that is really a horrid waste of time."

Gunnar was silent, and felt, for the first time in his life, a spark of jealousy, and that of Abraham. But at the same time he felt that admiration, that sacred reverence for a beloved object, which alone makes love for a woman take firm root in the heart of a man. Mother Ingrid looked at him; penetrated his feelings, and sighed—and that was not the last time either.

After a considerable time Elin and Abraham returned, and joy beamed from the eyes of the latter.

"He does not do it so very badly," said Elin; "and now I have promised Abraham that I will stop at home to-morrow, and that I will read with him the whole day, and that afterward at all his spare time I will read with him also, so that he may be able to go to the Lord's table, he as well as any other good Christian people, at some future time."

"Yes, there you'll get out of your depth," said Lena, and laughed.

"Thanks, Elin, my good, sweet Elin," said Gunnar, taking both her hands and pressing them in his, without troubling himself about what Lena said.

Abraham had vanished, but a little while afterward they heard the sound of clapping down at the water side, and as Lena was dreadfully inquisitive, she stole down the little hill to look, and quickly returned, ready to burst with laughter, and told them that Abraham was down there washing and scrubbing a shirt.

"Yes, that is quite right of Abraham," said Elin, laughing at the same time, and blushing a little, "because, as the truth must come out, I told him quite kindly, that I shall be very glad to read with him, only that he must keep himself clean and decent, well combed, and neat in every way, otherwise I could not do it."

"Yes, yes," laughed Gunnar, "we shall see that Elin will very soon convert Abraham into one of those *pettermätrar* about which Lena talks, because Elin can do what she will with people."

But now all went to rest, and, wonderful enough, Abraham was the one who had most to think about; an art which he otherwise never exactly profited by, or, indeed, very much practiced.

Gunnar was obliged to go to the church the following day, because it was a particular day on which the parishioners met on business, and he, on account of "that Anderson's tillage," must be there, as he had something to announce. Mother Ingrid and Lena drove there with pleasure, as it so happened that the horse was not out, nor could they have the use of it again soon, because when the hay and corn harvest once began, church-going and pleasure journeys were not to be thought of. Elin and Abraham remained thus alone, and he who has seen the opera of "Sargine," knows how love can do more than abilities; and he who saw Abraham's newly-awakened mind and attention, as well as how anxiously he studied every word,

every look of Elin's, could never have been mistaken in the sentiment which gave life to his hitherto soulless and dull existence.

He made already astonishing progress, and when he at dinner only ate half a dish of porridge, and left a piece of his bread, Lena laughed, and said,

"I fancy of a truth that this reading feeds Abr'm, for I never saw him eat so little before for dinner."

"Yes, it very well may be that it feeds," said Abraham, "meat to me is nothing at all to it; but I would gladly read in the afternoon, too, if Elin is so good as to hear me."

"Good Lord!" said Gunnar, half aloud to Mother Ingrid, "I really believe that Elin has put both sense and understanding into the poor lad; did you hear, mother, how sensibly he answered?"

"Yes, yes," sighed Mother Ingrid, "it would be good if she did not take sense and understanding *from* somebody else."

Gunnar looked at her in astonishment. He did not comprehend a word of what she said, and he pondered a deal about it.

Oh, these men, how amiable they are! and how intelligent and knowing! and what intellect they have, and what a great and glorious capacity for thought and investigation; but how little they can *understand* sometimes!

CHAPTER XXV.

ELIN could not sleep all night for thinking of her first day in the mowing field. At half-past three o'clock she was already up and dressed; she wore a striped woolen skirt, and a little black boddice which belonged to her mourning, and which was laced up in front, and with nothing on her arms but the snow-white chemise sleeves, because the day promised to be extremely hot. She stood thus, looking at her new rake, when Gunnar tapped at her window, and asked her to come out, because it was now time for them to be setting off.

"I only just want to get my hat," replied she, and the next moment she joined him.

Gunnar looked at her for some minutes with that pure de-

light which every one has felt when they see the most beautiful thing they know.

"Dear Lord! how charming thou look'st to-day!" said Gunnar, who was also quite gayly attired. He, too, was in his long, snow-white shirt sleeves, with a new broad-brimmed straw-hat on, a handsome homespun waistcoat, and new summer trowsers, ready for "the great mowing at the Hall-farm."

"Thou wilt be," continued he, "the handsomest and the neatest girl among them all, that I will answer for. But, sweet Elin, take, by all means, a pair of gloves with thee, else thou wilt have blisters on thy dear little hands, and then they will make all sorts of rude jokes; for delicate, and white, and slender as they are, and handsome as thou art, they will come about and stare at thee in all kind of ways."

"Would to heaven that I were the most active and the most hardy among them!" said Elin smiling, and sprang back again for her gloves.

After that they set out.

"Never before did I go to a mowing with so much pleasure," said Gunnar.

"Why so?" asked Elin, innocently.

"I don't exactly know why," replied Gunnar, "but it is such gloriously beautiful weather, that may be it. Didst thou ever see such a splendid summer morning, dear Elin?"

"Never," replied the maiden; and then they stood for a moment to listen to the lark which was singing high up in the air.

"How beautiful God has made our world, after all!" said Elin, and fixed her eye upon Gunnar.

"Ay, and all that are upon it; and all his human creatures can be happy sometimes," returned Gunnar, and drank in Elin's glance with delight.

"Yes, but then they must be good, and do that which is *right* in all things," continued Elin, as they again rapidly continued their walk.

"That as a matter of course," assented Gunnar, "for if the conscience only just begins to murmur a disapprobation about any thing ever so long ago, then it immediately becomes cloudy in the soul. No, one must go on one's way uprightly, and honestly, and in the way that God appoints, if one would be happy.

"Ah, Gunnar!" said Elin, and looked up again to her tall companion on the narrow wood-path, "how mother would have liked thee! how glad she would have been if she had known the man whom Lena had married! I tried, indeed, to describe thee to her after the wedding, and told her that thou wast the very handsomest and the most agreeable lad I had ever seen; but she said, what really is the truth, that goodness does not consist in beauty; and when I told her what a thoroughly good character thou hadst, she sighed, and said, 'that it would be well if it always remained so.' But ah! I at that time could not know how excellent and how kind thou wast! Now, however, now I know it, and *she* knows it too, and certainly she can see both thee and me here upon earth from heaven, where she assuredly is. What is thy opinion, Gunnar?"

Gunnar's heart was full of holy gladness because of Elin's innocent encomium. He made no reply; he said not a word; he merely took her hand in his, and she did not withdraw it; and thus silently, hand in hand, they came to the great meadow, where already many mowers and rakers were assembled.

Every body looked at Elin. Overseer Anders arranged and directed the mowing, and every one took his own place in the rank of mowers, and Elin followed faithfully every step which Gunnar took. They scarcely had any talk; but they often looked at one another, smiled and nodded, and then their hearts beat still stronger than before.

While they were taking their so-called noon rest, Bengt came up and renewed his acquaintance with Elin. Olle also came, and attempted, in a narrow turning, to put his arm round her waist, and "steal a little kiss," as he himself said. Gunnar, however, came up with his scythe, in desperate haste, and with a lightning glance of wrath in his eye.

"Have a care," said he, "of touching Elin, else I'll give you that which you shall never forget!"

Olle sprang away as fast as he could; but when he got to a distance, he waved a kiss with his hand to Elin, and bawled, and laughed, and made a disturbance, as usual.

Elin got quite well through her first day's work, but she was horribly tired in the evening, so tired, indeed, that Gunnar wished to carry her home, which, however, she laughingly prevented. Nevertheless she begged, when they had gone

half-way, that she might sit down for a moment and rest herself on a mossy stone.

"Thou canst very well go on, dear Gunnar; don't let me keep thee here, for I know the road by myself," she said.

"How thou talkest!" replied Gunnar. "Dost thou think that I would go away and leave thee here in the intricate wood, and so late in the evening? No, before I will do that, I will stop here, standing against this tree, all night."

Elin only looked up to him, with her thanks; Gunnar only looked at her, and they could not satisfy themselves with looking at each other, but they knew not that these looks were wrong.

As long as the mowing was at a distance from the Hall, Gunnar and Elin went to it together, in the same way that we have described, and the other haymakers and mowers said in the mean time to each other, "Have you seen Gunnar of Vika's sister-in-law? How dreadfully delicate she is! She is a handsome lass, but she looks so proud! And would ye believe she wears gloves! and has such a grand hat, and white woollen stockings and shoes—Heaven defend us—this hot weather!"

When, however, it came to the carrying of the hay, and the storing it in the barn, then Gunnar was compelled, as he said, to make an exchange with Abraham, for he must think about his own affairs. Lena helped him with these, and the old woman looked after little Gustaf, and prepared the victuals. It was a sort of torment to Gunnar to see Elin and Abraham setting off together to the hall, and yet he could not keep his gravity when Elin in a morning said, laughingly,

"Well, come now, Abraham! You are not ready, as usual, are you? Yes, then I must go on before you." And then Abraham, well washed and trimmed up; made his appearance, and with the most joyful of awkward grimaces prepared to run after her. Abraham was in the mean time become quite a different being, and that which Gunnar could not be sufficiently astonished at was, that Elin could persuade him, all the way there and all the way back, "to chop the Catechism," as Gunnar phrased it.

"It is very wrong of thee, Gunnar, to laugh at this," said Elin once, though she was not able to prevent a smile from playing about her own mouth.

"Good Heavens! I'm a long way from laughing at *the thing*, dearest Elin, but I am amused that thou or any body else in

this world could produce this effect on Abraham, and persuade him to it. But if any body could do it, it would be thou."

"Oh! any body else, who would have done it, might," replied Elin. "Thou shouldst see him; he is as pious as a lamb, and as devotional as a priest, with his hands clasped together, as he answers my questions; and now he knows the greatest part of the little Catechism, and I try to explain it to him as well as I can, and in the same way as I remember our pastor used to do to us communion-children four years ago."

"Yes, yes; thou wilt be explaining the word of God to him," said Gunnar, "till one of these fine days he will be explaining his love for thee—so think I."

"Ah, you menfolk! you are all like one another as pea to pea! you always will be talking about love and such stuff," said Elin, with a little disgust, and half laughing, and went into her chamber, while Gunnar, delighted and captivated, looked after her, and Mother Ingrid sighed.

One evening Elin and Abraham came home from the work at the Hall. They had carried the hay, and Elin had stood upon the rick with one of the other young girls. Elin had a deal to say about the day. Ma'msell Sara had been out, had treated them to a luncheon, and at various times had talked a deal with Elin; had called her up to her room, and given her a cup of coffee, biscuits, and other things. In going down she had met the squire on the stairs, and he had also had some talk with her: "And he will above all things," said Elin, "that I should go and live in service at the hall, either as parlor-maid or house-maid. He is a handsome and agreeable gentleman, the squire," continued Elin, "if he had not that hideous red hair, and then if he would only let one be."

Every drop of blood boiled and raged in Gunnar's veins, but he kept silence, and left the room.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A SUNDAY was now near at hand.

"To-morrow Elin and Abraham shall really go to church if Abraham gets his new clothes," said Mother Ingrid.

"Elin and Abraham!" exclaimed Lena, laughing; "it sounds just like a married affair, as if they were going to be wed."

"Ay, believe me! they would be made fools of, that they would!" said Abraham, with great simplicity, and licked his lips, while Elin alternately blushed, and was dying with laughter.

"Yes, my good Abraham," at length she said, "we don't trouble ourselves at all because they make fun of us; we shall go to church for all that, and read our Catechism all the way; shan't we, Abra'm?"

"Ay, to be sure," replied Abraham.

"Yes, but, look you, I will hear how that goes on, and so I shall go with you," said Gunnar.

And he did go with them; and, what was still more, he did not disturb their reading, but walked silently and softly behind them, and thought that Elin looked like an angel of God, as she went before him and expounded the word of God to the poor and hitherto half-witted youth, who now, partly in his own, and partly in some clothes of Gunnar's which Elin had borrowed for him, walked beside her so clean and orderly. By his answers he proved of a certainty that he was extremely simple and stupid, yet still that he was not without feeling and a small grain of understanding.

"What dost thou think of our good clergyman?" inquired Gunnar from Elin, when they came out of the church.

"That he is an excellent servant of the Lord!" said Elin, who had shed warm tears as she listened to the simple and truly heart-reaching words of the worthy minister.

"Yes, he is a servant of the Lord and a good man," said Gunnar. "I will always testify to that."

Abraham was to go from church to a sister of his mother's, who had promised him a summer coat, and thus Elin returned alone with Gunnar.

When they had turned out of the high road, and thus parted

from the other church-going people, who had observed with inquisitive glances the young, handsome, and neatly-attired maiden, whom they had only seen once before at church, they both walked on for some time in silence.

"Elin," at length Gunnar began, "dost thou know that I have *something* on my heart which *must* be spoken? I am about to beg something from thee, which thou *must* promise me."

"What can it be?" asked Elin, standing still, and gazing at Gunnar, whose voice was unusually grave and deep.

"Ay, come and sit down here a little while," besought he, "I have something to beg of thee."

They seated themselves upon a soft and inviting tree-stump.

"Yes, Elin," continued he, and took her hand in his, "thou shalt promise me—promise me sacredly, that *never*—never in all thy life, thou wilt take a service at Grantorp."

With these words, his dark eye flashed both with rage and jealousy, and with—love, and was also dangerously irresistible.

"I promise! I promise!—although I do not at all understand why thou desirest me to leave undone that of which I have never thought about," said Elin, quite bewildered by his glance, and with her head almost laid upon Gunnar's breast.

"Ay," said he, with flashing eyes, closed teeth, and pressing Elin to him, incited to this by many dissimilar feelings—"Ay, I will tell thee, Elin, the squire is the greatest villain and coward that I know, and he merely wishes to have thee in his service to—to ruin thee!" and, with this word, he clasped her to his heart, as if he would defend her from the prince of darkness himself.

"Oh, fie, how thou talkest!" said Elin, and escaped from him, rose up, and again commenced her homeward way. But her heart beat dreadfully, and a spark of light had opened her eyes, and sparks of love had kindled a thousand-fold in her heart.

The two walked on together for some time in silence, and then conversed on indifferent subjects. Elin was silent and reserved the whole day, and avoided meeting the burning glances of Gunnar; she read a long time with Abraham in the afternoon, when he returned with his new summer coat, thought much upon her departed mother, and was happy to think that she now saw her continually. In the evening, however, when

she laid herself down upon her new little bed, and said her customary evening prayer, she thought no longer on any thing, but slept as soundly and as calmly as usual, and resembled in this respect, although so unlike in others, not the worst of our young, accomplished, and well-read young ladies, who have their heads crammed full of romances and novels, operas and dramas, ballads and canzonets, in which love reveals itself in all its variations, colors, and tones. Elin was as equally ignorant of the symptoms of love, as of those of the most inexplicable powers of nature, and knew just as little of her own heart as of the stars which circled over her head at night; she was as little acquainted with its irregular and wild throbbing; and she would have been as much amazed, if any one had said to her that she loved Gunnar, as if they had told her that the earth went round the sun, and not the sun round the earth, and yet the one was equally true with the other. But Elin knew it not; she, therefore, felt no repentance, no pang of conscience, and did not get up in her own imagination a whole torture-history or tragic-romance about criminal love, a sister's jealousy, slander, separation, tears, anguish and suffering without end, nor at last upon the dagger-stab, pistol-shot, poisoning, death, and burial.

No, Elin thought of nothing of this kind, because she thought not once upon the subject—of *love*, namely. She merely felt it, and feared it, and avoided it; but when it no longer stood beside her and startled her, when Gunnar's glances no longer set her heart beating so violently that it threatened to leap out of her breast, then she forgot it altogether and was tranquil and happy. Thus it was with her on the following morning, and for many days afterwards; and Gunnar,—who was not so incessantly at her side,—was kind and brother-like, but not so violent and passionate as on the former occasion. He seemed, as it were, to have recovered himself, whether from good instinct or from resolution, we cannot rightly say; because sometimes men revenge themselves upon our great penetration by becoming incomprehensible, and such was the short trance, the short tranquillity, which Gunnar now seemed to enjoy, but out of which he was so soon to awake, when the lightning of chance circumstance began to flash, and arouse him from his slumber, or his good resolutions, we know not rightly which.

The glances of Gunnar and Elin did not meet and melt together: they no longer rested for moments lost in each other,

as they had done formerly; but if their eyes met, one or the other cast down his, or turned them aside; and if they each felt that the blood mounted up into their cheeks, the eye of the other did not see it, and therefore it produced no effect. Elin, at all events, thought not of it, and we have said that we do not know what Gunnar did.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Time sped on softly; and one day, during the noon-rest, Elin was sitting down by the shore of the lake with her sewing, and Abraham was kneeling before her, reading aloud a lesson from the Catechism. Elin went on with her sewing, and needed not to look at the book, because she knew it off by heart. Gunnar stood leaning against a tree, and resting, at the same time, on his gun, with which he had just shot a cherry-eating magpie. He stood thus silently observing the group, but said nothing, and disturbed not the lesson. Abraham scarcely boggled at all in his reading; but if he did so, then he first looked up at Elin, and then at Gunnar, as if to beg pardon for his fault from them, the only human beings who ever had shown him kindness, sympathy, and pity—the *only* ones he ever loved.

"Yes, that really is so very well done," at length said Elin, "that if you continue to go on in the same way for some time, I certainly think that you may go to the minister, and ask him to admit you soon to the communion. What dost thou think, Gunnar?"

"I did not rightly hear what thou saidst—I was thinking of something else," replied Gunnar. But Abraham! he sprang up with a joyful and heavy-footed bound of delight, and before either of them heard a word of it, he took Elin with one of his strong arms, and Gunnar with the other, and pressed them both at once to his newly awakened heart. Unprepared as they both were for this sudden manœuvre, they made no resistance, and Gunnar's and Elin's cheeks met together, and almost their lips.

"Let me go, Abraham!" exclaimed Elin, and dashed about

her like a young foal; but when she did get really at liberty, she burst into such a hearty fit of laughter that Gunnar was almost obliged to join, although he at the same time felt grateful and angry with Abraham.

Which of you, ye romance-crammed and stuffed young ladies, would, on an occasion like this, have burst into laughter? Not one of you! You would have wept, blushed, not even have been able to look up or to move; others, perhaps, with a little more experience, would have made a great noise,—would have been supported,—would have steeped themselves in *eau de Cologne*,—have drowned themselves in cold water, and have choked themselves with *eau de luce*,—would have puffed, and panted, and thought—thought—thought—Heaven knows what!

But Elin laughed, concealed, by that means, her blushes, stroked her hair from her face, took up her sewing materials, which, during "this earthquake of the heart," had nearly fallen into the lake, and desired Abraham to be so good as to be a little less energetic in showing his joy another time. Gunnar was silent, and would have been very glad to have kissed his own cheek, but as he could not do it, and was not able to kiss Elin's, he therefore went on his way.

"Thou hast so many times wished to have a sail on the lake," said Gunnar to Elin, in a very calm and brotherly tone, which he had assumed—Heaven knows how—that same evening during supper; "thou hast wished for it, dear Elin, but there has never yet been exactly time for it; now, however, as I am going out this evening to lay some night-lines, that I may take a little fish, both for our eating and for the pocket, I shall be glad to take thee with me, if thou wilt."

"Oh, that I will, certainly, so gladly, so gladly!" exclaimed Elin, and clapped her hands with delight. "I have never been on the water but a few times when I was a child, and then Erik rowed me on a pool in the wood, in a little old boat which the boys of the town had at that time, and which afterward fell to pieces."

Gunnar's countenance visibly darkened every time that Elin mentioned Erik's name; and Mother Ingrid, who always saw things, sighed unobserved, as she sat there in her dark corner—there in the dim corner of life's decline.

"Then shall I go with you, and row?" said Abraham, in a business-like tone, for he now never needed to be told his duty,

unless when he was busy over his eating; now, however, he hastily rose up and laid down his spoon, because he saw Gunnar get up.

"Oh, no," replied Gunnar, who certainly did not wish to have Abraham in his boat—"oh, no; there is not occasion for that. Eat your supper, and then go to bed, for Elin will help me to lay the lines—that is not so difficult a matter, and I can row myself."

Mother Ingrid sighed more deeply, and Abraham sat down to his dish of porridge, which was less agreeable to him than usual this evening, so that he entirely forgot to scrape the dish with his spoon.

"Take something more about thee; it will be rather cold on the lake, however still and warm it may be on the land," said Gunnar to Elin, and went down to the shore.

Elin ran into her chamber, tied a handkerchief over her head, and threw a woollen shawl over her shoulders, and then hastened after Gunnar. When she came down to the shore, Gunnar stood already in the boat, and offered her his hand. It was many days now since she had taken his hand. She trembled perceptibly, and Gunnar from that believed that she was afraid.

"Do not be afraid," said he, "my sweetest little Elin. There is not the slightest danger here with *me*. Come and sit here;" and he placed Elin in the middle of the boat, opposite to him, took the oars, and began to pull with long, powerful, and manly strokes.

"Oh, I really am not afraid!" replied Elin, who neither wished to tell a falsehood, nor did so, for, least of all, did she fear his love, which she did not at that time understand herself. "I am not afraid; on the contrary, I think it is delightful," added she, and began to feel ashamed, because instinct whispered in her ear that laughter and shame are very often an antidote for love; as silence and gratitude, again—but what is the use of saying it? Ye who will read this, ye romance-crammed young ladies, you know it beforehand, perhaps far better than we who write.

"Now, don't sit there laughing and jesting, but make thyself of some use, my dear Elin," said Gunnar, half vexed at the maiden's pleasantry in this glorious moonlight.

And now Gunnar showed Elin how she must bait the hook before she threw out the lines; and she did it as well as she

could, and pretended several times, not without a little unconscious coquetry, that she should fall into the lake. Gunnar, however, was wise, and saw plainly enough that she was only making fun of him.

"Yes, throw thyself in," said he, therefore, "and I will plunge in afterward, and fish thee out, or else stop with thee at the bottom of the lake."

Elin became silent. "At the bottom of the lake with Gunnar!" thought she; "oh, that could never be so very bad!" Death had not any horrors for Elin; and who knows whether it might not have had a great attraction for Gunnar in this wonderfully beautiful evening hour. It was now the beginning of August; and this August moonlight, more glorious than that of any other season, fell broadly over lake and land. The lake lay like a silver sea, tranquil and pure as the blue vault of heaven, and its surface rippled sometimes with a soft motion, as if it were occasioned rather by the restless spirit of the water, than by any thing else, even by the lightest wind. The shores extended themselves so marvelously around the lake; they seemed as if they were changed; as if the moon had laid a spell of enchantment upon them, which alternately threw them into the most brilliant light and the blackest shade. They were not at all like that which they seemed to be in daylight. The lake, the heavens, the earth—nothing resembled itself in this mysterious, enigmatical hour. Not less so the human heart, the human mind. Gunnar was silent, Elin was silent, and no other possible sound was heard, excepting the regular stroke of the oars.

Gunnar rowed into the middle of the lake, and when they were come there, Elin said—

"Now I have laid all the lines, what more shall I do?"

"Sit quietly, and look at me," replied Gunnar.

"And what would be the good of that?" asked Elin, and cast down her eyes.

"It will please me, it will delight me, while I row," returned Gunnar.

"Oh, nonsense!" laughed Elin. "No, do thou tell me a story such as thou dost sometimes. I fancy that I should just now like to hear a child's story about giants, and witches, and such things, because when I am *with thee* I never am frightened, not even in the middle of the night."

Poor Elin! she could have had no idea how much she

betrayed in that one expression, *with thee*, upon which she laid an emphasis.

"Indeed!" said Gunnar, and then, after a little thought, he continued, "Oh yes, I know many stories, and one which surpasses them all. It is called Frithiofs Saga; it was one I borrowed from the tutor when I was ill of the scarlet-fever some years ago. Ah, if I could but tell it thee! At that time I knew long pieces of it, nay, whole pages, by heart; for it quite fixed itself there if one only read it once. But now I have nearly forgotten all the parts I knew, and if thou dost not know the story, thou wouldst not perhaps have thought so much about them. There was a king's daughter, who was called Ingeborg—and ever since the time when I saw thee first at the wedding-dinner, I fancied to myself that she was like thee—and she loved a peasant; for thou must know that in those times there were no proud noblemen and fat citizens, but only kings and peasants; and Ingeborg loved the son of a peasant, and they two were brought up together in a temple, and the temple lay in a lofty grove, or, as the story calls it, in Balder's Pasture; and, dost thou know, Elin, I have only just to row round to the other side of the lake, to show thee a meadow which I always imagine to myself is like to that 'Balder's Pasture.' The meadow belongs to a pretty little farm, which is the property of an old major, a horribly stern but fine old gentleman, who has a very beautiful daughter, almost as pretty as thou art."

"Ah, yes, but that is not telling me the story," interrupted Elin, who never liked to listen when Gunnar or any body else said that she was pretty.

"Nay, that I know well enough," remarked Gunnar, smiling; "and I never really had any intention of telling thee the whole story, for that I neither could nor would I exactly, but I will show thee 'Balder's Pasture,' as I always call it to myself."

The boat now glided under some tall alder-trees, which hung over the lake; and as these were thick and leafy, and it thus all at once became dark, Elin grew afraid and crept toward Gunnar, who now no longer rowed, but merely guided on the boat with one oar into the shade of the alders.

"Yes, come hither to me," said Gunnar, with a tremulous voice; "thou art now a little bit afraid because it is so dark, but thou shalt soon see something so grand, so grand!"

Again the boat glided out into the moonlight, and there lay

before their eyes a lovely meadow, in which the fragrant hay was now piled up into large haycocks, amid the lofty and branching oaks, luxuriant, white-stemmed birches, and other trees of still finer kinds ; for here might be seen elms, maples, and ashes, although the oak was the most general. Here and there, also, grew thick and branching hazel-bushes ; the trees, however, stood apart, scattered here and there, and the moon threw down masses of light amid the night's envious masses of darkness. Elin thought that she never had seen any thing so beautiful and glorious, and could not sufficiently admire this ' Balder's Pasture,' as Gunnar called it ; and just then, all at once, both she and Gunnar heard a rustling, as if of some one walking, and then another sound, as of two persons quietly conversing.

" Hist ! " whispered Gunnar to Elin, and shoved the boat noiselessly under some alder-bushes, which perfectly concealed them from the sight of those who approached, but, at the same time, did not prevent Gunnar and Elin from seeing and hearing what occurred on the shore, which was here quite low.

" Hist ! " whispered Gunnar again to Elin ; " I would not that they should see us ; gentlefolks always fancy when we poor folks are out in the evening, that we have something bad and unlawful in hand."

" God forbid it ! " said Elin, and drew herself, influenced by some inexplicable feeling of fear, still nearer to Gunnar, and he did not repulse her, but put his arm around her waist ; and, thus sitting, silent as spirits, unobservant of their hearts' still more violent and rapid pulsations, they heard the following words :

" Oh, my August ! " said the voice of a young lady—and they saw at the time that it was the major's daughter—who stepped now forth into the moonlight, leaning on a young man's arm. " Oh, my beloved friend ! This is the last evening, the last hour of our glorious summer ; for, when thou art gone, it will be only autumn—autumn in nature, and autumn in my heart ! "

" Do not say so, my dearest Elfrida," replied a smart, well-grown youth, whom Gunnar recognized as her cousin. " Oh, do not say so ! By these words thou wilt embitter my whole life, and make still more heavy the hour of parting. Ah, if it were only *I* who suffer, but that thou also shouldst do so ! That I, the wretch ! should have destroyed thy happiness and

thy angel peace!—I who, nevertheless, knew so well that thou wast no longer free, that I never in this world could hope to possess thee, even if thou couldst have released thyself from thy plighted word; because Poverty—that hydra which destroys every thing—has, indeed, caught me within his talons, and *another*, endowed with all that Fortune has denied to me, will soon, soon clasp thee in his arms. Thought of despair!”

Elfrida sobbed upon the youth's breast, and the lovers again returned by the way they came.

Gunnar and Elin sat long silent and motionless.

“Poor lad!” said Gunnar, at length, in an almost inaudible whisper close to Elin's ear, so that not even the air, but only she, and scarcely *she* was able to hear the words, “Poor, unhappy youth! he loves her so dearly, and he shall never have her, and I—I shall never have—*thee*!”

“Now, let us really go home,” said Elin, pretending that she had not heard Gunnar's words. She hastily resumed her seat in the middle of the boat, laid the oars in Gunnar's hand, and made a sign that he should row.

“Wilt thou not go on the land a little?” whispered Gunnar.

“No, thank you,” replied Elin; “row home at once.”

He rowed at first with unequal and ill-timed strokes, but afterward briskly and without intermission. They were very soon at the shore, and opposite to the cottage.

“Thanks, Gunnar!” said Elin, as she sprang out of the boat.

“Good night, Elin!” replied Gunnar, and secured the boat. During this operation, Elin reached the house, and was within her little chamber before Gunnar had left the shore. She opened the door, and then fastened the hook with a strange excited feeling, or as if she had been pursued by something—by a *something* which was not Gunnar, and which was a spirit of evil. She undressed herself hastily, and lay down, and began immediately to think of her mother; to think whether her eyes would be gloomy—whether they would look darkly and with displeasure upon her, or not.

“Ah, sweetest mother, be not angry with me!” said she, half aloud and with clasped hands. After that she repeated all her evening prayers, more audibly than usual—repeated them yet a second time, but with great rapidity; and when, after the second time she found that she had not been thinking about them, but had merely hurried through them while her heart

was beating violently, she went through them all yet a third time, more slowly and deliberately; and endeavored with all her might to think upon every word she uttered. After this she shut her eyes that she might sleep, and said to herself, "I will never go on the water any more, it makes one feel so uneasy."

But she could not sleep. She had heard that when a person in a wakeful state desires to sleep, he must think upon a softly heaving lake, or else on a gently waving cornfield, but this experiment she had never tried, because she had never been sleepless before, excepting at the time of her mother's death, and then she would not sleep; now, on the contrary, she wished to sleep to be rid of "foolish thoughts." She began to experimentize. She thought upon a heaving lake, but it soon became a sea of moonlight upon which a little boat glided, in which she sat, and the boat was rowed by—— "No! a waving cornfield would certainly, be better!" thought she, and she turned her mind to such a one, but there immediately came to her fancy the cornfield where, on the preceding day, Gunnar had gone to reap, and where she had tried to bind up after the reapers, but could not manage it, although Gunnar had attempted to teach her.

The little sod-roof at Vika covered, small as it was, many restless and perfectly sleepless beings. The human sufferings below it grew and shot up, as if in emulation of the weeds above; and like these also, neither autumn nor winter, cold nor snow, would be able to prevent their growth.

Mother Ingrid lay sleepless in the depth of her curtained bed. She did not weep, but she sighed. Age and indifference had made her almost both deaf and blind to all the rest of the world, but for her son she had the quickest ears and the most delicate sight, and she—she alone, who knew him so well, saw in what danger he wandered, on the brink of what a deep abyss he stood.

Lena, also, had been now for a long time relapsing into her former sour and crooked temper, scolding threatening and commanding. She had begun to grow weary of Gunnar's manner, which was so much more friendly and unreserved than it had been before Elin's arrival. She began to think that this was not by any means sufficient. She desired to have his love also; Gunnar, however, seemed to be dead and buried, deaf and blind to her demands; and she now began to beat her

brains to discover some mode of accomplishing her wishes, and asserting her power over his heart, for her love awoke and flamed up in proportion to his repugnance to her. Even with Elin she began to be dissatisfied. The pleasure of novelty was now over. Elin was too cheerful, too kind, too refined, too independent in her ideas, and, at the same time, too submissive in her disposition; besides this, she dressed herself too smartly, she took too many holidays, however much and industriously she might work, and all that without any wages at all. This last circumstance, however, prevented Lena, at the same time, from venturing openly to scold and grumble, during this last summer month, at all events, because if she did so, it might determine Elin in haste to act independently, and take another service for the following twelve months. Nevertheless, Lena was testy and perversely tempered toward her, found fault with many things which she did, as for instance, teaching Abraham to read; constantly studying in the Bible and other books herself; and not the least, this evening's sail on the lake. In Lena's opinion these things were so unnecessary; were of no profit—were childish and foolish; besides, to all this must be added, the commencement of a dark, and from this time rapidly growing jealousy, which now and then shot forth sparks that kindled into flame her violent and choleric temper. This night, therefore, she lay awake, and wept from envy and passion. When Gunnar returned, he pretended not to notice it; perhaps he really did not; at all events he pretended that he was soon asleep, but he was awake, and now for the first time looked correctly and honestly down into his own heart, and found there—nothing else but Elin—she, and nothing besides, in the very innermost of his heart's core.

Abraham lay on his press bed, breathing aloud, and tossing over every minute. Never since he was born had he till now been kept awake by any cause connected in the remotest degree with his soul; now he could not sleep from the vexation he felt because he had not gone with them on the lake—more especially as he fancied that Elin had laughed at him; Elin, who never once thought on the subject—and, therefore, he now repented that, after all, he had not eaten up his porridge. These thoughts occasioned him to be still awake when Gunnar returned, and he began to make inquiries from him respecting the sail and Elin, and the long lines, upon which Gunnar merely replied, "What the deuce are you lying awake for?"

Only lie down and be still, and go to sleep, and don't trouble yourself about me and my long lines!"

Little Gustaf lay in his crib, and whined, and moaned, and cried, because he had a pain in his stomach; and as we have just mentioned the little fellow, we may as well say that he was a little darling to Elin; that she kept him with her nearly the whole day; that she once or twice upbraided Gunnar with being so cold and indifferent toward "his little lad;" that Gunnar on these occasions was silent, but nevertheless, when neither Mother Ingrid nor Lena saw it, he would caress and amuse him, for he cared so little about Lena as not to have the slightest jealousy, and regarded the boy as any other child, becoming attached to him because he saw him daily, and because he saw how dear he was to Elin; and the little fellow, by some inexplicable contradiction of nature, was fonder of Gunnar than of any one else in the family, because even Elin gave way to him.

Such was the general state of mind during the night; and when the morning came Gunnar went and examined his baits, taking Abraham with him, who now would have given all he had if he might but have lain still and slept. Mother Ingrid sat in her corner with her spinning-wheel, Lena racketed about at her household work, Elin sat at her window sewing with the utmost industry. Out of doors it rained; people could neither go to work in the corn nor the hay. The whole of nature was clouded, and men are, indeed, a part of it.

At half-past three o'clock, after a perfectly sleepless night, Gunnar went down to the shore, in a gloomy state of mind, and Abraham followed him, half asleep. When they came to the boat, Gunnar was the first to enter it, with that lightness and grace which was peculiar to him; still, a close observer might have perceived on this particular morning an unusual slowness and indifference in all he did. After him Abraham tumbled clumsily and heavily into the boat, so that it rocked from side to side, and then immediately seized upon the oars.

"No," said Gunnar, "let the oars alone. I shall row myself, and you can examine the lines." Abraham looked pleased and astonished, like a child who finds some important piece of business confided to it which had never before been done. He had never once before been trusted even to touch the lines, much less to busy himself about them when set.

"There, sit down in that place, and don't stand wagging the

boat," said Gunnar; "Ah, no, in that place, not there! and there's no need for you to keep staring into my face in that way. Sit down as you should do."

Gunnar wished to be as much alone with his thoughts as possible. He had not been able to disentangle them during the whole night, because, beside Lena, he could only despair and feel dislike. But now, forgetting the whole of the gloomy scene; the rain which soaked through his clothes, the morning air which chilled him to the bone; forgetting all besides else, he riveted every thought upon that Elin whom he loved beyond every thing else—fervently, frantically, with his whole burning soul and passionate heart, and yet with a certain degree of reason. He, indeed, gave himself up (for the first time, it is true) to this love; but he said even then within his heart, "It is wrong, it is improper, it is criminal. Lena has sinned far, far more toward me, but I have forgiven her, and it does not belong to me to punish her by committing an offense against her. I cannot at all endure Lena; I can never make myself do so; and now still less, I fear, than ever. But that is no reason why I should love Elin; I must endeavor, with all my might, to overcome this feeling for her, and, above all things, I must not drag Elin down with me to destruction."

With these good resolutions Gunnar returned home that morning, but with a poor booty of fish. As he passed Elin's window, he saw her sitting at her work. He nodded coldly to her, went on his way, and did not speak to her through the whole day.

Elin, who, during the night, had felt the bitterest contrition, entirely lost this feeling in consequence of Gunnar's coldness, which caused, in its place, anguish and anxiety. She began to love; and without thinking upon, or once having a presentiment of danger, she sucked in poison from a feeling of which she had no knowledge. She had felt herself gay and happy in Gunnar's affection, and in the thousand little proofs of attention and devotion in which she hitherto had not imagined any thing wrong, improper, or dangerous. Only for one moment, in the boat on the preceding evening, had a feeling of anxiety come over her—an uneasiness as to whether her mother's spirit, which might hover around them, would not condemn her for thus going out alone with Gunnar; but then, thought she, "Gunnar is so odd sometimes." Now, however, when Gunnar was cold and displeased with her, all her trouble of conscience

was gone, and nothing remained but sorrow of heart. This Elin felt to be very heavy and very bitter, and yet she did not understand herself!

During supper, which always used to be lively, and diversified with pleasant chat, there now prevailed an unusual silence and dullness. Gunnar sat thoughtfully at the table, looked down, ate, indeed, but took as small a quantity in his spoon each time as if he had been Elin's bird. Elin sat there on a low stool, and gave little Gustaf four spoonfuls for every one which she herself took. Lena, in a sour and angry temper, busied herself at the fire; threw about the pot-hooks and the fuel with a great noise, and in a rage, at the fire-place; swore at the wood, which was too wet, and at the meat, which was too dry, and which ought to have lain in pickle till Sunday; and at the rain, which poured down just now when she had to go for water; and at the bucket, of which the handle was broken; and at Abraham, who had not brought it; and, lastly, because, as she said, "there sat four folks, who very well knew how to eat and cram till they were as full as they could hold, but who were not willing to do a single turn to help her!"

"Bless me! I will help thee," said Elin, most willingly, and got up instantly from her little stool.

"Ay, methinks I shouldn't get a deal of help," said Lena, angrily, and with a loud laugh, "if *ma'msell* is to go and fetch the water in that big, heavy, cursed, broken bucket."

"I went and fetched water for you to-day, and many another time," replied Elin, mildly.

"Yes, that I believe, but it was in a pail that little Gustaf might have carried," said Lena, tauntingly.

"There is a water-tub," said Elin; "if you will come with me, I will gladly try to help you with it, if we did not bring it quite full, because it is too big to carry up the hill from the lake, and I am not used to it."

"There is no need of that," said Gunnar, and rose from his seat. "Come, now, Abraham, let us two go and fetch the tub full, and then there is an end of all the trouble for this evening, and to-morrow, if it rains, I will mend the bucket."

Lena, like all ill-tempered and unreasonable people, did not pay any attention to the reasonable and and helpful spirit which all this evinced, but she merely took hold of Gunnar's first words:

"Ay, indeed!" said she, incensed; *'there is no need* that Elin should be of any use to me! Did not Gunnar say so? Nay, she shall, indeed, sit like a princess, I reckon! but, look you, if *she* wants help she must have it on the spot. If she wants a flower-garden, then both Gunnar and Abraham are up and digging; and if she will have a fence round it, it must be done; and if she will have a flower-stand, Gunnar is up at night to make it; and if she will have pine-twigs to lay on her floor, and leaves to stick in her ceiling, Abra'm runs all the breath out of his body to get them! But, mind ye, as for me, I must go and do every thing for myself! I never have any body to make such a baby and such a pet of me!"

The two men had been out of the house a long time, so that they did not hear more than the very commencement of Lena's angry complaints; Elin, however, wept silently, and little Gustaf stood beside her and dried her tears, and whispered to her, "Mother is cross; leave off soon, Eli'—Eli' shall not cry; mother soon will be kind again!"

Mother Ingrid, who had scarcely spoken the whole day, now said, "I think you are unjust in what you say, Lena. You know as well as we all, that Elin will gladly help you with every thing that she is able; and as to that little flower-garden with the fence round it, it was mostly done on Sunday afternoons in the early summer."

"Yes, and they might have found something more useful to do at such hours," replied Lena, yet at the same time a little mollified, or a little sorry that she had scolded Elin before the Michaelmas changing of servants was over. She went, therefore, as if accidentally, past Elin, and made believe that she now, for the first time, was aware of her tears, although little Gustaf had shouted it aloud, and was now crying with all his might because Elin cried.

"What in all the world are you crying for?" said Lena to Elin. "There is no need for you to take on so because I scolded Abra'm, the fool! because he had not mended the bucket, and did not help me, nor——"

But now Gunnar and Abraham returned with the water-tub, and Lena set to work with it, besides which, she thought it better not to scold any more that evening.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SEVERAL days which succeeded the foregoing were all cloudy and rainy out of doors, and cloudy and discordant within. For a long time a certain degree of gayety, cheerfulness, and comfort, had prevailed, and no one had really enjoyed it more than the old personified experience, Mother Ingrid, in her corner. Now every body except Lena sighed, and *she* grumbled; but as she, after all, neither would nor dared to grumble at Gunnar, and as she considered it not to her advantage, *at this present time*, to find fault with Elin, and as she never scolded Mother Ingrid when the others heard it, there now remained only Abraham as her victim; and he, poor fellow, when she did so, always took up his Catechism and read aloud, that he might thereby drown her voice; and if any of the others were present, she was ashamed of abusing him, when he was incessantly reading in his Catechism, and never forgetting to repeat to himself—"Question!—Answer!" as if those words were a part of the edifying matter of the book.

If any one of the family during this time felt a spark of joy, it was this poor Abraham, because in the chance of being examined by Elin, and praised by her, he read really with as great satisfaction as was possible for him to be conscious of; and when Elin kindly encouraged him, and represented to him the happiness and the holy joy which he, perhaps, would soon experience when, like other good Christian people, he should go to the Saviour's table, and there celebrate His memory, give thanks, pray, and promise—then Abraham wept for joy, and made some of his very strangest gambols in the water-puddles for very delight.

One day Elin said to Lena, because she felt too shy to speak to Gunnar, since he had shown himself so cold and indifferent toward her—

"Dearest Lena," said she, "wilt thou beg of Gunnar, that he will very soon go with Abraham to your dean or rector, as you call him, that he may hear how the poor lad has improved himself in reading, so that he might, perhaps, at some future time, let him be confirmed. That would be such a happiness

for him, and such a pleasure and satisfaction for us all, I think."

"Stuff! what good should we have of it?" said Lena, vexed; "and Gunnar has something else to do, than to run off with Abraham to the parsonage. And if he were so silly as to take the fool with him, then they would see Abra'm stand and stare like a billy-goat, and not be able to read a single word. No; believe me, all this reading is nothing but childishness, and waste of time. He is, and he will still be, an ass, let one do what one will, and let him poke his nose ever so into the Catechism."

Elin sighed, and was silent. She began already to discover that the peace of the family was jeopardized if any one contradicted Lena in the least. Mother Ingrid, however, sat in her corner and spun, and heard all that went on, and pondered out a way of adjusting matters so that every thing might turn out for the best, if possible. Among other things, she determined that poor Abraham should go, and let their universally respected pastor hear his (Abraham's) progress in sense and Christianity. For this reason, the next time she was alone with Gunnar she began to speak on the subject.

"Dear Gunnar," she said, "now that the rain and the bad weather prevent thy working, and, I am sorry to say, thou canst do nothing either with the hay or the corn, canst thou not find time enough, either morning or evening, to go to the rector with Abraham, and let him hear how he can say his Catechism, and ask whether he could not let him be confirmed in a little time?"

Mother Ingrid's words were, as we may very well remember, law to her son at all times, and therefore he felt himself obliged to comply, and promised immediately to go the next morning. The same evening he mentioned this to Abraham. Accordingly Abraham, in the morning, put on his best holiday clothes, and assumed a most important and dignified demeanor.

"What does all this mean?" said Lena, spitefully and contemptuously; "what folly have you got in hand now? What stupid nonsense is this? Who is going to make a fool of himself on working day?"

Thus said Lena, while the men dressed, and made themselves tidy. No one answered a single word, but when they were ready Gunnar said to Abraham,

"Come, now;" and they went.

"It is *my* doing," said Mother Ingrid, when they were out of the house; and this she said that she might avert the storm from Elin; and then she began spinning so busily at her wheel, behind her rock of flax, that she could scarcely hear Lena's scolding and grinding.

CHAPTER XXIX.

GUNNAR, on his way to the rector's, was gloomy and full of thought; this was now always his mood: and when the worthy rector, and good pastor, after he had heard with pleasure Abraham's improvement, and had granted his request that at some future time he would admit him at the Lord's table, he began to inquire from his former disciple and favorite, the young Gunnar, about his domestic affairs; to all of which he received monotonous and few-worded replies.

"And thy respectable old mother is well, and gets on well with thy wife?" asked the clergyman.

"Oh, yes," replied Gunnar.

"And thou has only one child yet?"

Gunnar was silent. The rector took his silence for assent; but Gunnar thought, with despair in his heart, "I have indeed *no* child. I have indeed *nothing*. When mother dies then shall I be alone, and—one word, *one* single word at the right time to this same holy man before whom I now stand, and I should have been free—free as the bird of the air." And in the midst of this freedom's sun shone Elin's bright image before the young man's thoughts.

"And who was that young girl who was with thee at church a few Sundays since?" asked the rector, still further; "I did not know her. She was not of our communion."

"With permission, that was my sister-in-law," replied Gunnar, bowing in a most confused manner, and crimsoning so deeply, that the clergymen remarked it.

"With permission," said Abraham, and bowed like a clown, in imitation of Gunnar, but without any embarrassment, "with permission, that is she who taught me to read so well; for she

is just like a reading priest, and the best girl that ever was; and she is, with permission, before any one else."

The rector could not help smiling at this speech, nor could Gunnar, although his heart beat; for now, standing thus beside his confessor, he knew how he loved Elin better than every one else, and also how great was his sin in so doing. He avoided the glance of the holy man, which was keen and penetrating, but at the same time gentle and consolatory. One might almost have believed that he both understood and pitied Gunnar; if he did, he locked this knowledge and this pity within the remotest sanctuary of his thoughts, until a resolve attained there its maturity.

CHAPTER XXX.

GUNNAR bore incessantly within him a terribly bitter feeling, and felt constantly the ague and cold without; for he was now scarcely ever to be seen in the house. He had thus a sort of excuse to himself, that he now, far oftener than formerly, sought an especial friend to deaden his pain; for the moment warming and cheering, consoling, and calming; I mean, unhappily, the brandy-bottle. Gunnar, in the early period of his sad marriage, when cold reason guided all his steps, had taken one, and at the most two drams a day. In those glad and gay times which preceded these, he had, indeed, too often given way to the taste of the hour and the inspiration of the moment, and had taken two or three; but now! overcome by the pain and passion of a hopeless attachment, which he strove in vain to extinguish, he endeavored to drown his anguish, and took often his five and six draughts, sometimes two at once; and Lena, the wretched Lena, low and brutish in all her feelings, testified her little refined and true affection for him, by rather exciting him to this transgression than endeavoring to restrain him from it; and Lena was a striking example that it is only the wicked, low-thoughted, and contemptible woman, in whatever station she may be, who, without loathing—yes, often with a certain revolting pleasure—can see and associate with drunken fellows.

To Lena's astonishment, however, Gunnar never became in-

toxicated, though she herself provided the strongest and best brandy in the country; and this because he bore far more than any one else through his strong and uneffeminated constitution.

Elin saw nothing of all this, for she kept herself almost constantly, during this rainy weather, within her own chamber, weaving a piece of delicate stuff for Lena, out of which Gunnar was to have clothes made. But, with a mournful heart, she strove with continually breaking threads, and continually out-breaking tears. Never had Elin had such need of her dear departed mother; never did she seem to see so little likeness between herself and Lena, and never so great a difference between the commands and advice of a good and upright person and those of a harsh and unreasonable one. Lena insisted repeatedly that it was Elin's fault that the weaving succeeded so ill; and as Lena, in practical life, was a thoroughly clever and knowing woman, and well understood all her business and affairs, and in her perpetual remarks on all that went on about her was mostly in the right; and as Elin was, in the highest degree, good and conceding, and without sufficient self-reliance; and as Lena, moreover, had still much of her mother's voice and her mother's look, although hers were sharp and hard; so, Elin bore all in silence, but with heavy sorrow at heart, and thought almost incessantly of the changed manner of Gunnar, and pondered over the inexplicable cause of it—often fancying that it was owing to something which she must have done, though she knew not what, but which gave her cruel pain.

One day came Lena, and protested that the web was all awry, stood awry, was woven awry, with many other awries. She seized on the loom with the strength of a man, and dragged it hither and thither; wrath gave her an altogether amazing power—pushing and jamming the great heavy loom to and fro. Thread after thread snapped asunder; and Elin, who knew that she would have to piece them all again, only sighed.

"Yes, but it makes it none the better to stand there sighing and staring at it," said Lena, flying up and down, and athwart and across in the loom, "without taking a pull here—no! *there!* Ah, speak, milksop! Go, look for Gunnar, who stays down in the shed chopping wood!"

Through the drenching rain Elin rushed forth to Gunnar, and felt even a refreshment from the heavy shower, compared with the lightnings of wrath and the storm of words.

"Dear Gunnar!" said Elin, timidly, "be so good as to come

in to Lena, and help us a little with the loom. There is something awry which Lena can not herself set right."

"Shall I bring some tools with me?" asked Gunnar, without looking up.

"I don't know," answered Elin, and her heart beat so violently that she did not know what she said. They went in, one following the other at a considerable distance.

"See here!" began Lena, the moment she set her eyes on Gunnar; "see here, what a piece of work Elin has made of the weaving! Had I not come in, she would have ruined it outright and for ever. See, *here* it is awry; *here* it is awry; and here it is warped: and if thou hast not got thy hatchet, I must e'en go after it, while thou lookest on. Come here, Elin!"

Lena hastened out, and did not return before they heard her call to Abraham to bring the forgotten axe. In the meantime Gunnar set the loom right without saying a word, and Elin assisted, in the same silence. But at length, when she thought she heard Lena approaching, her oppressed heart admonished her to avail herself of the opportunity, and with a tearful glance, she looked up to Gunnar timidly, and said, "Good Gunnar, art *thou* also angry with me?"

"One can not well be angry with God's angels!" answered Gunnar, hastily, and with an open, clear, affectionate look, and as not considering how *much* those few words implied. But Elin *felt* it, for she became instantly consoled, joyous, and cheerful, bore without vexation all Lena's chidings, did promptly what she required, and sat for an hour afterward alone, singing to herself, piecing all the broken threads, but without a single tear in her clear blue eyes. She was so joyous, so kind, so playful, and cordial, that even Lena became pacified; and at evening, as the family were at supper, and the sun went down in great splendor, Lena, said jeeringly, and with a sort of malicious joy, yet laughingly,

"Mark me, if we are not invited to a mowing-help at Lars Carlsson's, now the sun shines so bright. I know that he designs it, and waits only for the weather taking up. I wonder how his meadow looks which lies yet uncut. The hay will be nothing but dry bents, it's my notion; and he will not get half the value of the crop. But they are all alike, the scrubs and sanctified beasts, who think themselves better than every body else, and wiser than God the Father."

"Ah! he is neither a scrub nor so conceited as thou thinkest,"

replied Gunnar; "he is a dashing fellow, yet knowing and clever, only he has plunged overhead, and taken too great a farm; and so he can not manage it just as he ought."

"Ay, ay, and therefore he is just a scrub; and, therefore, he has to make great mowing-helps, while all other people mow their own rye!" retorted Lena, half laughing.

"Ah, well! never mind, so that his harvest-supper does come off!" exclaimed Elin, joyously, and clapping her hands. "I have never in my life been at a harvest-supper. That my mother never allowed me, and in those days I never got a rake into my hands. But see now! Oh! that will be delightful!"

Elin had not uttered these few words, before a youth of some fourteen years of age stood in the room, and made his father's best compliments, who hoped that the whole family would do him the honor to come to-morrow to the harvest-supper.

Elin leaped for joy, and made all sorts of odd faces at Abraham, who also took a few of his "swine's capers," as Lena was used complimentarily to call his lubberly leaps. Lena laughed, and poured out a full dram for the boy, who swallowed it at a draught, and took his departure to issue more invitations, and drink more drams.

"Did not I say it?" cried Lena, before the boy had well closed the door behind him. "Yes, I knew to a certainty, that, if the weather only took up ever so little, we should have a prompt summons to help at the mowing, instead of his doing his own work when it wants doing."

"Thou canst stay at home," said Gunnar, coolly.

"Yes, I should think so, indeed!" answered Lena, angrily; "and thou, and Elin, and Abra'm, and whole troops with you, can go. No, thank you! I shall go with you, though it does vex me thoroughly. But at what o'clock must we set off for the morrow's attendance? That must be done at midnight, I fancy?"

"No," replied Gunnar; "I shall row thither, and then it will not be necessary to set out before three o'clock."

"Well, that is, at least, early enough to my thinking," said Elin, laughing, and skipping hastily away into her chamber, to look after apparel for the morrow's fête—to make use, for once, of two phrases out of the language of the saloon.

Elin had a little fault: she was vain of her dress. Both her mother and herself had been industrious and clever, and had, in fact, earned no small sum with the needle, and all had gone

for Elin's dress and little fancies. She was, moreover, very affectionate and compassionate, and gave her left-off clothes to the poor and needy, and thus had herself very often new and handsome ones, and had always a great quantity of them in proportion to her rank and condition. She took the greatest care of them, so that they always looked as though they were wholly new. Among her variety of apparel, she had a particular holiday dress of light pink print, which she thought she might put on, although she continued in mourning for her mother, for she had heard that it was allowable to wear pink in mourning; and, delighted as she was at the prospect of going to the harvest-supper, she must, for no consideration, put on gay-colored clothes.

In the morning she arose at the first peep of dawn, and began humming to herself for joy over the lovely weather and for something else, to comb out her long auburn and glittering hair, clean and soft as that of a maid of honor; and, plating it into a large, thick plait, she finally fastened it in the most approved style with a neat little comb and a large hair-pin. Sighing, she next put on her gold earrings, the last she ever received from her departed mother, securing them carefully in their places that they might not get lost. She then clad herself further; and when her toilet was complete, in her light handsome gown, with black apron, and black silk scarf, she looked as neat and spruce as a little doll, for her clothes sat well and gracefully on her slim and yet full figure.

"One can not well be angry with God's angels!" she exclaimed repeatedly to herself, and sung it over to herself in a low, soft tone. There was something heavenly and enchanting for Elin's heart in these words of Gunnar; but she regarded it merely as a little innocent exultation that her brother-in-law was not angry with her. "He is certainly annoyed by something," she thought at the same time, and drew a deep sigh at the idea; but the egotism of affection, the greatest of all, made this reflection vanish before the other. "He is not angry with me! He compares me to the angels of God! If I were but one, I would hover continually around him, and gladden and inspirit him!"

"Now, then, Elin!" screamed Lena, shrilly, when it was about half-past three, "art thou sleeping yet? Up with thee in an instant, or we shall row away without thee. The men are already down by the boat. Bestir thyself, and fling round

thee thy wrapping-shawl, for it is cold on the lake so early in the morning."

All this screeched Lena as she hastened along the passage, and without opening Elin's door; but Elin heard it, obeyed her summons, caught up her clothes, threw over herself her great wrapping-shawl, and hastened, skipping and joyful, after Lena.

"Ah, no! I must kiss little Gustaf before I go, and say a kind word to 'mother-in-law,'" said she, when she had got a good way from the house; turned at once round, flew back again, hastened to the child's cradle, kissed him so that he woke, and then called laughing to Mother Ingrid, who already was up spinning in her corner, "Good-bye, mother; amuse yourself with Gustaf, whom I have wakened up for you;" and with that she hastened out, and was scarcely out of the house when Lena was at the strand. The old woman ceased her spinning, and, smiling sorrowfully, looked after the good and happy maiden.

"Yes, *such an one* should she have been!" said she, half aloud, sighed deeply, and began again to spin; at the same time that, with the other foot, she rocked Gustaf's cradle, in order that he might sleep again. It was, however, neither with the excited tenderness of a father's mother or a mother's mother, the rays of which go right up out of the innermost depths of the heart, but with the care of a good and gentle nurse.

In the mean time our four bounded over the light crisp waves, stirred by the summer wind, and breathed into their lungs the brisk air of the lake and the morning, which was changed into the fresh joy of life in the soul, and a soft melancholy in the heart. Even Lena was less stern, less sharp and cross than usual, and Abraham himself got a half-friendly word from her. Her good humor expressed itself now, as at all times, in loud laughter, and satirical, half-spiteful, but frequently by no means stupid reflections on all that passed around her in the world—the works of God as well as those of men. She spared no one, and was abashed by nothing. She had now almost all the talk to herself in the boat, and pretty much in this manner:

"Bless me, Abra'm! Thou lookest altogether like a new pot-cuckoo, that one sees in the market, as thou sittest idly in that red-brown summer dress, with that red-brown face, and

those red-brown fists. Or some one has dipped thee in alder-bark dye, and then rolled thy head in herds. What the deuce, Hans Mattsen ! I think thou hast white stockings on thy legs ! Bless my soul, what extravagance ! But, Heaven help us ! Why I actually believe that they are the bare legs that are so clean and white. Ha ! ha ! ha ! Well thou hast scoured them ! Thou must have had both sand and ashes to them—ha ! ha ! ha ! What a stupid lake is this, which takes so many turnings and twistings, and has so many promontories, and islands, and unnecessary things, that are merely lying in the way of people who want to get straight on. But, there ! how plain Holma church is to be seen ! that is because they built it so preposterously large that all the money was gone before it was half finished, and so that nobody can go thither in winter, lest they should be frozen to death ; for the whole congregation can sit in one corner of it. Have you heard, *apropos* of the church, that they begin, both girls and little boys, to preach in the island congregation there ? So the turn will now come quickly to us ; but I tell thee, and swear, that if thou beginnest to preach or to make a noise, I will strike thee dead ; for thou lookest, indeed, as if thou wanted to preach ! And Abra'm there, he must, since he has picked up a word here and a word there out of the Catechism ; perhaps he will next mount the pulpit and cry, ' Repent ! ' But that shall be but a moderate sermon, I promise you, for I shall preach myself as much as is necessary."

"Yes ! God knows, I both *can* and *will*," muttered Abraham ; but Lena did not hear it, or affected not to hear it, but proceeded :

"Well, now, I begin to be hungry, but, thank God ! we shall get enough to eat and to drink in the course of the day ; there is no fear of that, for there is nobody so proud, ostentatious, and lavish, as Lars Carlsson and his wife. Goodness ! they are genteel to madness ; and they would now spend their last farthing, or part with their last morsels, though they should starve all the rest of the year, for there is nothing like consistency in these sort of people. One thing to-day and another to-morrow ; they live and they have nothing, and vagabonds are they altogether. In every thing new and preposterous you are sure to find Lars Carlsson. Should not he, think you, be the very first to enter that new fire-assurance company which Gunnar praised so exceedingly, and must, of course, have a finger

in, were it only to let Lars befool us into it? as though we had not taxes, and impositions, and misery enough, without laying more on ourselves!"

Amid all this gossip, Gunnar and Elin sat silent, and gazed at each other, for they sat so near and so opposite to each other that they could not avoid it; and Gunnar said to himself—"Perhaps there is some sin in it"—and Elin said nothing. But presently the morning sun began to cast his warm beams upon the voyagers, and Elin unfolded and opened her great checked wrapping shawl; perhaps impelled to do so by the sun, which shone and warmed her from within.

"What in all the world!" exclaimed Lena, as Elin opened her shawl. "Why I trow thou hast been tricking thyself out in fashionable muslin! Never did I see the like of that at a harvest-supper before! What is the good of that? Mercy on me! I never caught a sight of this folly till thou just now opened thy shawl; for thou hast taken up thy gown-skirt so that I only saw thy petticoat. Bless me! What an absurd and vain apparition!"

"Oh, gracious Heaven! how vexatious!" said Elin, wholly cast down. "Am I now too grand again? Ah! only think if they laugh at me, and mock me! Ah! that I did not take care to ask thee, dearest Lena!"

Hard-heartedly and scoffingly replied Lena, "Ay, why didst thou not? Thus it is to be so wise in one's own conceit! And now thou must put up with being well laughed at."

A tear rose to Elin's eyes. Gunnar had hitherto kept silence; but now it was no longer possible.

"Don't fret thyself, Elin, for such a trifle!" said he, with a glance so mild and kind, that Elin's tears quickly returned to their source. "Be glad and light-hearted as before," continued he, "Lena only quizzes and jests with thee. If thou art as fine and neat as a doll, well; don't trouble thyself about that, let them do it who are not so. Console thyself with that."

"Oh, yes! that is a fling at me," said Lena, reddening with envy and jealousy; but Gunnar began to rock the boat and busy himself with the oars, and spoke in a high and overpowering voice to Abraham, bidding him steer, and not be so stupid; and then he began, clear and loud, to whistle a lively polka; the way in which for hours he answered Lena's outbreaks, and which were thus most frequently compelled to silence. It was so now, and within a few minutes they lay-to at the strand,

and began to advance towards Lars Carlsson's shop, which was, perhaps, a furlong from the shore, but to eight such legs as those of "our four" such a distance is but a few steps. When they arrived, many were come, and many were not come. The mowing and entertainment began almost immediately, and the work continued with little interruption till six o'clock in the evening, when it for the most part concluded, and all turned homewards to take the only regular meal of the day; for till then they had only bread and butter, with or without cheese, ale, brandy, and the like. The labor of the day, and the consequent appetite, made the place of the supper at first not perfectly silent, but calm and quiet, and each one thought only of himself and his wants. Elin had taken her place at the table among some other pretty young peasant girls, who all, in the most zealous terms, praised her neat dress and her general appearance. Elin was silent, and felt far more ashamed than gladdened by it, though she thought that she could not by any means perceive that quizzing which Lena had foretold her, but met rather general good-will and kindness, for *thus* did Elin interpret the admiration which was excited by her attractive exterior, her joyous disposition, and her tasteful attire, which nothing but Envy found unbecoming; and it is not to be imagined that this black lady—Envy—does not seat herself at the harvest-supper, amid the peasantry, as certainly as she does at the royal table amid its guests, and casts her poison into the brandy-flask as surely as into the champagne-bottle.

Presently the first hunger was appeased; and then the company, for whom the long and well-covered board had been spread in the court, began to be loud in their discourse; and the host, with his sons and servants, went round and exhorted the guests to help themselves, and to spare his entertainment as little as they had spared their strength in the meadow. He was an admirable host, was this Lars Carlsson, a perfect example of hospitality; paid the most incessant compliments to his guests, though somewhat grotesque ones, but spiced with great country wit, and found continual reason to bid them eat and drink, be merry and lively. When he came to Elin and the young women, he reached her first of all a silver cup of foaming ale, and then holding it to his own lips, said—

"A health, thou little blossom of beauty, who this year, for the first time, hast burst forth in our fields—a health, my sweet

one. I should really lose my heart outright, only that all the boys here would go mad, play the deuce with me, and murder me out of sheer jealousy. And yet, see there!—may I not one day come to be your father-in-law, eh, my sweetest?"

Gunnar, who did not sit far off, looked at him with a pair of eyes in which might be plainly read both thunder and lightning; for Lars Carlsson had another son, older than the one who had brought the invitation to Vika, and who showed himself one of the company's handsomest and most attentive attendants, and at the same time one of the first of rural dandies. His name was Oskar, for Lars Carlsson was an admirer of antiquity, and had, in keeping with this taste, named his children. One daughter was christened Maximiliana, another Eugenia, who were commonly called Maxa and Eugena; and, in the same manner, his Nicholas was obliged to creep out of his Russian skin, and into that more Swedish one called Nisse.

Elin looked up, and received the friendly host's compliments with a pleasant and jocose manner; not at all confused or disconcerted, though she blushed beautifully. Elin was one of those favorite children of nature, of those lovable, womanly beings, who are sometimes, if not very numerous, found in every possible nook and condition of life, and who display in whatever they do, a tact, a charm, and a power of fascination which no one can readily withstand. The effect of this in these women is an augmented charm; for the consciousness of being observed and admired by men becomes so familiar, and a matter of course to them, that they retain their self-possession, it never forsakes them; they never wholly forget themselves, looked confused or surprised, are at a loss what to say or to answer, flash open their eyes or close them, titter or look affected, as do others—that is, the many who only now and then display a little paroxysm of beauty, only sometimes awaken a feeble admiration.

When the son Oskar came to Elin and desired that she should also drink a health with him, she declined this, and jested with the youth in a wholly different tone to that which she used toward the father; so prudently, and with such regard to her maidenly dignity.

"Oh!" thought Gunnar, and that nearly for the first time with perfect ingenuousness—for the rapid libations had thrown a light mist around his delicate conscience, though not alto-

gether around his brain—"oh! if I had but hit upon this treasure, this jewel; if I could have pressed her to my bosom, and called her mine—then would I willingly have labored in an anchor-smithy day and night—or—at least from sunrise to the latest hour of evening."

When the supper was over, the dancing began immediately, to the sound of several brisk country violins, and out on a little lovely green grass-plot, surrounded by lofty and shady trees, and where some benches were placed for the occasion. Scarcely had the dance commenced, before one, two, three carriages of the gentry, and some chaises, drew up before the stately farmhouse, and out of them stepped the family from Grantorp, the major and his young daughter, Miss Elfrida, and with her an older gentleman in their company, with the clergyman of the parish and his whole family—all invited by Lars Carlsson, "to have a peep at the dance on the green grass a little while in the evening;" and every one had been obliging enough to show much pleasure in complying. They were now served with both coffee and tea, the former strong and excellent, the latter somewhat flavored with powdered cinnamon; and, further, they were offered city biscuits, fine bread, and with these wine in tall slender glasses. The appearance of the gentry occasioned some little interruption to the dance; but after a few minutes this went on again with redoubled spirit, and soon were seen the major, who resembled one of Charles XII.'s blue troopers, and the young ladies, the young people from the parsonage, the tutor and boys from Grantorp, mingled in the glad and lively dance, and commenced a little polska; and a black cloud passed over the senses of Gunnar when he finally saw Elin whirl round, gay and glad-somely, with the master of Grantorp himself! This sight was more depressing to Gunnar than any other that he could conceive; and he noticed with demoniac glances how charming this gentleman found the young and handsome Elin, who, amidst all the gentry, formed the chief topic of conversation.

"My faith!" said the elderly gentleman who was with the major, and took a huge pinch out of his box, "this damsel would create a sensation in the great Stockholm itself! She is actually a *Taglioni champêtre*. See only how lightly and gracefully she revolves, exactly as Taglioni, in the Sylphide, pirouettes round her sleeping lover. *C'est charmant! Bravo!*"

"Yes, but our distillery servant, Olle, does not look, me-

thinks, much like a sleeping lover, but one right widely awake yet!" said laughingly, and somewhat spitefully, Ma'msell Sara, who frequently answered with a peculiarly caustic and laconic irony, the old *précieux* chamberlain's eternal Stockholm common-places.

Gunnar this evening experienced all the pangs of jealousy in his heart, every one of which was different to the rest. One cut deep, one stabbed maliciously, one tore it up violently, another rent it to and fro. When Elin whirled round with the master of Grantorp, Gunnar had the strongest desire to send a bullet from his rifle through his skull. When she, contrary to his wish, waltzed with Olle, till he ceased to drag her about, he felt a burning impulse to pay him off in the same way; when, gladly and lively, with chat and joke, she danced with Bengt, with whom she was so well acquainted, as he generally spent his Sunday afternoons at Vika, Gunnar closed his eyes; and when Elin—as Gunnar thought, though he did not express it in our fashionable phrase—coquetted a little with the son of the house, the conceited Oskar, then Gunnar went his way, and leaned against a tree, as if he was dizzy with dancing; for he had, in fact, been dancing, in order to forget his suffering—and had performed an impetuous polska with a young girl whom he had often waltzed with in his former gay and happy days of sport and pleasure, but for whom he had never felt much attachment.

Elin, with all the quickness of a woman's eye, had noticed this violent, and almost maniacal dance, noticed Gunnar's excitement, and the damsel's contentment, and finally Gunnar's leaning against the somewhat distant elm. Without pausing to reflect, she abruptly brought the dance with young Oskar to a close, and hastened away to Gunnar, took him gently by the arm, that he might perceive her—for he stood there with closed eyes—and with a tone so sweet and tremulous that a person must have been made of lead not to detect in it all the disquiet and sympathy of affection, said,

"Gunnar! what is amiss with thee? Look up, or I believe I shall faint with terror, for thou look'st so ill."

"I ill!" replied Gunnar, unable to control himself—"Oh, no! *Now* I am better than ever; and still better shall I be, if thou wilt only dance with me a little half hour!"

"If I will!" said Elin, who had suffered inexpressibly from Gunnar's coldness and repulsive mood for many days past, and his avoiding her now during the dance. But such a dance as

there now took place! Yes, that was worth witnessing, for the poor young creatures now danced, not upon mortal feet and legs, but upon the frenzied wings of love. They flew! Their glances melted into one, and time flew for them equally swift as themselves. Gunnar had merely aimed at dancing some moments, and half an hour had already flown by, and he believed that there were yet some left of the brief instants.

The air was clear—night had already fallen; and when Gunnar and Elin at length terminated their dance, the dusk of the evening, and the general confusion, caused no one to see Gunnar press Elin for a moment to his heart; he loosed his hold, and hastened again to his tree, but with a hundred-weight's oppression on his conscience. Elin stood still and speechless, and neither heard, nor saw, nor answered, when Lena came, and, hastily clutching her by the arm, said with a sharp tone,

"That was what you came to the dance for, eh, good-for-nothing! Thou thought to seduce Gunnar from me, that I can believe. I will away home from these wretched, abominable goings on. They that will, can remain standing here, but Gunnar shall row me home. Thou and Abraham can stay here if you will, and go round by the road."

"Nay, I shall accompany you," answered Elin, both lost in thought and full of thought.

Lena's wrath, for it was in rage that she now really spoke, had not flamed up of itself, but the Still-man Olle had both kindled it, and blown it into a blaze with all his might. Lena had been sitting and gossiping with some others, middle-aged women and girls, who had already quitted the dance, when Gunnar began the mad waltz with Elin. Lena had not at all noticed it till Olle plausibly and maliciously, as was his constant habit, came to the group of gossipers, and, screaming and laughing, made these remarks on "the horrible dance."

"See you, Lena!" he shrieked, "how Gunnar dances with your sister? He likes her famously, I can see, and she is just as crazily fond of him; so that it is not so much to be wondered at, if he thinks more of her than you, Lena! Ha! ha! ha! Take care, Lena! that may become a foul fish for you to scale. Your sister may soon become the mistress of the house, and rule you, and you may go as maid-servant under her into the corner. Ha! ha! ha! I should be amused to see how angry you'd be if your sister supplanted you, as—the

devil take me!—I believe she has already. Ha! ha! ha! See how they whirl round! See how passionately they gaze on each other! And there! I verily believe that he kissed her before they parted, for so, at least, it seemed. Ha! ha! ha!”

Lena needed to hear nothing more to make the fiendish madness of jealousy blaze up in her; she flew at once from her place, and fell upon Elin as we have seen.

We have said that Elin stood motionless and speechless where Gunnar had left her after the dance. She did so still. She did not rush away now to the tree where Gunnar was leaning—she *now first* woke to a full consciousness. She felt now that degree, that excess of affection which we call love, and which no woman can feel for any other than the man whom providence has destined for her consort, without crime, especially when that object of affection is the consort of another. All this now stood clear to the mind of Elin; and she was conscious how inexpressibly she loved Gunnar, and how wrong it was. She no longer heard or saw, or took leave of any one, or spoke a word, but followed Lena mechanically, when she went up to Gunnar, seized him by the arm, and asked him whether he stood by the tree and slept—whether he had had enough of his wild dancing—whether they should not row home.

“Ah, certainly!” answered Gunnar, rushed away from the tree, and hastened down to the shore where the boat lay, altogether forgetful of Abraham.

Lena and Elin followed; and when they arrived at the boat, they saw, with some wonder, that Abraham lay and slept in it. But all were silent, for every one was in a mood of mind difficult enough to describe. When they had entered the boat, Elin wrapped the shawl about her head, and pretended to sleep. Gunnar, on the contrary, rowed with tremendous long pulls, as if he would fly from some one; but the evil accompanied him, for it was fixed in the center of his conscience, and bit keenly and deeply into it. Lena attempted to wrangle a little, but as no one answered, she was compelled to be silent. At length she spoke thus to Abraham:

“Never did I see thee before do any thing that was not precisely stupid. But it was sensible enough to go and lay thee down in the boat; much more sensible than some others who danced and flung, both in season and out of season.”

No one replied; but, after a moment's silence, Abraham said, in a low tone, "Yes, the dancing has not fallen very much to my share—that God knows; but the fact was, that, as Elin would not dance with me, I was resolved not to dance with any one else."

Elin did not hear Abraham's remark, and it was well that she did not; for her heart was oppressed before, and it would have become more so if she had perceived how she had wounded another human heart. Women have, at least, a spark of compassion in such cases, especially if they are good, pure-minded, and incorrupt. All were silent, and Lena's wrath began somewhat to allay itself, especially as Gunnar said a few kind words to her, asked her whether she was cold, and whether she would not have his Sunday coat to wrap herself in, as he was rowing without it, and it lay in the boat. Lena, however, was not cold, but was, at length, weary of keeping silence, and finally began to express her discontent in the following manner:—

"That was really a horrible feast and tumult! Such things are enough to make any one poor, who is not richer altogether than Lars Carlsson. It is horrible how set up the whole family is by a bank! the girls and the boys too. And what was the use of inviting the gentry? It was nothing but downright pride! Ma'msell from Grantorp sat there, I saw, in her most fashionable summer hat, for I know them all well enough; and Miss from Svanvik was as grand in her mousseline-de-laine as at the banquets of the gentry. That is just an ass, that major, who wishes her to have the poor scarecrow from Stockholm, the chamberlain, or chamber-servant, or whatever his title may be—that old, long, lean, hell-cat, from Stockholm, who does nothing but take snuff in church on a Sunday. Him she will be compelled to have, whether or not; for so says Anna Lisa, who is cook there."

Elin sighed, partly on her own account, partly on that of the poor young lady. Gunnar merely rowed without rest or pause, either for body or mind. It began to dawn before "our four" landed at Vika; and, silent and out of sorts, went all to their beds for a short sleep.

When Elin found herself alone in her chamber, that terrible anguish and disquiet fell over her which every right-minded being *must* feel when he has a great reproach to make himself; who has done something which is not only sinful and unjust,

but which is hopelessly irrevocable ; and all this Elin seemed to herself to have done. " If I had stolen, if I had lied and calumniated some one," thought the young girl, whose sin-register was so short, and made up according to the popular notions—" if I had done any of these things, I could readily restore the stolen property, recall my words, weep and pray for forgiveness, from both God and those whom I had injured, and none but myself would suffer for my fault ; but now !—now I have done too grievously wrong, and know not how I shall repair the mischief."

She wept bitterly, and implored God, and the spirit of her mother, to strengthen and counsel her. But the Most High is, as we well know, deaf and silent to such prayers, so long as we do not listen with open ears to the voice of conscience, through which alone He speaks loudly and clearly. Elin was, perhaps, not wholly able to comprehend this strong and internally-written law, but she listened to it, nevertheless ; and when the morning came, she shunned every glance at Gunnar, every possible meeting, and humbled herself to Lena's minutest wishes. And now first became Lena thoroughly intolerable. Her suspicions of Elin and Gunnar were fully awakened ; and though she did not openly express her meaning, she sought incessantly for occasions to, at least, torment Elin, to chide and reprimand her, and blame her on the most absurd charges. Elin bore all. Gunnar was rarely within, and when he entered Elin went out. Lena saw nothing which could properly excite her jealousy, but it seethed, nevertheless, suspecting that she had cause for its existence.

So passed whole days—yes, even weeks. Hay and corn-harvest went on, and drew near to their close, and the earth began already to look yellow and stripped, like a heart which had no longer any hopes. The earth, however, will soon become white, in order again to become green ; but the heart !—ah ! that neither grows lighter nor greener, but parches up, freezes, withers away, till, finally, the green blades are plucked up by the roots.

But the hearts of neither Gunnar nor Elin froze, or were parched up, but they burned with a flame which strove to destroy every sense of honor and of duty. When Gunnar saw Elin, he felt only one desire—to press her to his bosom, and tell her how dear she was to him ; when he did not see her, his vivid yearnings, and his consciousness of his infidelity, perse-

cuted him, and he was devoured with remorse for his unhappy passion, yet he was strong enough to seek to surmount it, and he avoided Elin with all possible care.

Elin, on her side, had no longer any thought for any thing but Gunnar. No creature on earth did she love more than Gunnar; for the slight degree of affection which she felt for the other three was merely the consequence of the relation in which they stood to Gunnar. If she caressed little Gustaf, she thought of Gunnar; if she submitted to Lena's ill-temper with mildness and submission, it was now merely for Gunnar's sake; and if she showed herself helpful and kind toward Mother Ingrid, it was almost wholly from affection to the son. This affection had drowned all other feelings, and yet gave itself not a moment's indulgence; for she avoided Gunnar, on her part, attempted the impossible, which was, not to think of him, and gave to her boundless love nothing but tears. But these flowed often, and copiously; and many fell on the slender threads in the loom, whose strokes kept time to the throbbing of her heart for whole days together. The loom was at once Elin's comfort, refuge, and sole confidant. In this she lived. Gunnar must have clothes made from this web; he would bear and wear every thread which she wove together; and this thought was enough to give to her labor that charm which nothing else could possess. Lena saw with what zeal she labored at it, and what patience she displayed over it; but Lena was not endowed with a single fine feeling, or she had altogether outworn such, and therefore she did not comprehend the real cause of Elin's zeal and diligence, but ascribed it merely to good habit and disposition; and, without commending her by any means, she felt a miserable strife in herself between the desire to keep Elin with her, and to have her away; for here jealousy and selfishness came into a revolting contention, and no one could yet say which of these feelings was the Goliath or the David. But this was soon to be determined, and that from many occurring circumstances.

CHAPTER XXXI.

WE have said that Gunnar was seldom at home, and it was seldom indeed; for whole days together he would take his meals out by himself; and often he came home merely for a moment, swallowed a little food, with the usually accompanying brandy, and then hastened out again, frequently seeing no more of Elin than a glimpse through her window, but always listening to the quick stroke of her shuttle, and that with a melancholy kind of pleasure, in the thought that it was for him that she wrought. But one day he was at home at a regular meal-time at noon, and all the members of the family were assembled in the room. Gunnar sat solitary at the table and ate. Elin had long before abandoned the custom of eating out of the same dish with him, for she fancied that she could perceive that it troubled Lena; but she now sat upon her little stool, with her earthenware basin on her knee, and imparted plentifully to little Gustaf of her food. Abraham sat, as usual, in his corner by the door, Mother Ingrid in her nook, and Lena busied herself with preparing the food, eating, ever and anon, out of the same spoon with which she stirred the pot. Thunder had muttered all the morning, but now it gloomed tremendously. It became at once almost pitch dark; and while they sat in astonishment at the cause of it, the lightning, in turbulent and manifold flashes, blazed in through all the three windows, and a crash as terrible accompanied it. The window-frames were dashed in on one side, and the room was instantly filled with rolling smoke. Every one believed that the thunder-bolt itself had fallen into the room; and Elin, following the simple impulse of nature, cast herself, in her terror, with Gustaf in her embrace, into the arms of Gunnar.

"Gunnar, Gunnar, we shall all perish!" she exclaimed.

Gunnar clasped her a moment to his heart, but released her again instantly, and said, with much feeling,

"Don't frighten thyself so, Elin dear; don't tremble so, dearest mother, the danger is over now. The lightning fell just by us, in some tree probably, but the deluging rain will soon extinguish it."

And it did rain terribly! Hail and rain rattled and rushed like fire, round about and over the house. None ventured to look out, or go to the window, much less to go out, except Gunnar, who did not hesitate to go into the court and look round, and at the same time to gather up some hail, perhaps not so big as hens' eggs, as the city newspapers had it, but quite as large as walnuts. When he brought them in, Elin expressed her astonishment, never having seen hailstones so large; and Gunnar bade little Gustaf take them, and he took them, but he started when he felt how cold they were in his little warm hands. Abraham laughed aloud at this, and Elin joined the laughter, with the constant disposition of youth to laugh, so long as it has no cause to weep.

"Bless me! thou stupid, senseless thing, as thou art, Abra'm," said Lena, with an appearance of anger, and turning towards Elin, against whom she was embittered since her involuntary movement at the explosion of the thunder, which by no means escaped her jealous and inquisitive eyes, "One," continued she, "is astounded with some hailstones, which she never saw the like of, and the other laughs at a little child which is frightened. Come here, then, my little boy, let mother take him, and don't let them make a fool of thee. Come, then," continued she, and offered to take little Gustaf from Elin, but he clung to her; and in the midst of the contest, the door of the room opened, and a beggar girl entered, more than usually ragged and forlorn, and at the same time thoroughly drenched with the deluging rain, which still continued.

"What, in Heaven's name?" said Lena, repulsively, "is that thee, Lotta? So, of all things, art thou and thy mother, the thievish slut! again in the country here? They said that you both were safe in the tower of Mariestad! Well, it is best for you that you take heed to yourselves, for you, ye witches, are like the bewitched hen, which draws eight stivers out of the house every time she goes in and out of the door, for wherever you get your noses in, there something is missing, that is certain. Don't stand staring in at the door, I say. Thou hast no business to stand there, so shabby and wet as thou art, and dripping as the rain does from thee."

This was Lena's welcome to the poor girl, whose teeth chattered in her head with cold and hunger, for the rain and the wind had almost pierced through her.

"Go forward to the fire and dry and warm thee," said Gunnar, "and ask the mistress to give thee a bit of meat."

"It is all gone," said Lena, angrily, and flung with the pot out into the kitchen, but dared not contradict Gunnar. She did, however, what she could, for she put out the fire at which she had cooked.

"There is a piece of bread for thee," said Gunnar, and took Elin's bread, which she turned to and fro in her hand, but dared not herself give to the girl.

"Thanks, many thanks," said the forlorn girl, and, becoming assured by the compassion of Gunnar and Elin, she asked of the latter some little article of dress to cover herself with. But now came Lena back out of the kitchen, and said angrily, as she saw the girl put the bread into her wallet, "Pack off—go thy way to the eternal pit, or I will help thee!"

"I have allowed her to warm and dry herself a little," said Gunnar, "and she need not go till the rain is a little over."

"Oh, it is so, is it?" muttered Lena. "No one shall obey me, but every one shall house here that will, and I must go by myself and drudge—and—"

But Lena's wrathful speech we do not trouble ourselves to complete, for even they to whom it was applied did not trouble themselves much about it. But it cut deep into Elin's soul, for she always split the words of Lena on the edge of conscience, fine as a hair, and seemed ever to stand in debt to her, yet could not help feeling how unreasonable, harsh, and unjust, she was towards all others. She stole away to her little chamber, and Abraham rushed out, wild as it was, for the mistress's thunder terrified him far more than that of heaven; but Gunnar remained behind to avert the rage of Lena from the poor girl. As soon as the rain would permit, she too went her way. When she closed the door, Lena listened after her a while, and then sprang to the window, which looked out upon the road, and stood there some minutes, when she started hastily forward, and with an oath exclaimed, "Nay, that shall not be!" and darted out of the door.

Gunnar was sitting with his head bowed on his hand, and giving no attention to Lena's movements, till she banged the door after her in her wrath. He looked up, glanced at Mother Ingrid, as if he would ask some explanation from her of the cause of this last outbreak of Lena's anger; but as the ancient dame did not lift her eyes from her wheel, but spun on, sunk,

as it seemed, in wholly different thoughts, he looked out of the window, and now saw Lena returning with a little bundle under her arm. Like an arrow was she again in the room,—the rain still, though more lightly, continuing,—and cast the bundle with great violence on the bench, and exclaimed, fiercely and bitterly,

“I fancied that the stupid Elin had something in her head. That I suspected; but see, this shall not pass, to throw away clothes upon the pitiful beggar girl. She met her there in the entrance, and gave her them. Nay! sooner than that shall be, I will have them *myself*.”

The fact was, that Elin, compassionating the poor, half-naked girl, had caught up in haste an old gown and neckerchief, which were ragged, though not much soiled, but neat, as was every thing which Elin possessed. These she had given to the poor girl, calling her to her as she was going away; and all this the cunning Lena had heard and comprehended; and, flying after the girl, had snatched from her, without ceremony or right, the little which she was so thankful for, and which had made her so happy.

“What is the meaning of all this?” asked Gunnar, who did not clearly understand Lena or her wrath, nor whence the bundle really came; for he believed the beggar girl had been gone away some time, and had nearly forgotten her.

“Ay, that I will relate,” said Lena. “There goes the silly and stupid Elin, and gives to Banka-Lotta such of her clothes as are good enough for any body here. But, mark! I snatched them from her altogether; and now will I take them, and never again shall Elin see her gown or her neckerchief, when she has so completely thrown them away.”

“Fie, thousand fiends!” said Gunnar, jeeringly. “Thou art always alike, Lena, that must one confess; thou never hadst a heart in thy bosom; and therefore nothing ever goes well with thee in the long run. And who authorizes thee to take from Elin? And what dost thou give her? Why, *nothing*—not so much as I can lay on my nail, although the girl drudges for us the whole day. And I have seen clearly enough that thou meanest to give her nothing the whole year round, nor the next neither. But, mark, that shall not be! I am master here, and can both command and forbid, when I please; and if I rarely exercise my power and authority, it is none the more extinct, understand; but now, I say—” and here Gunnar



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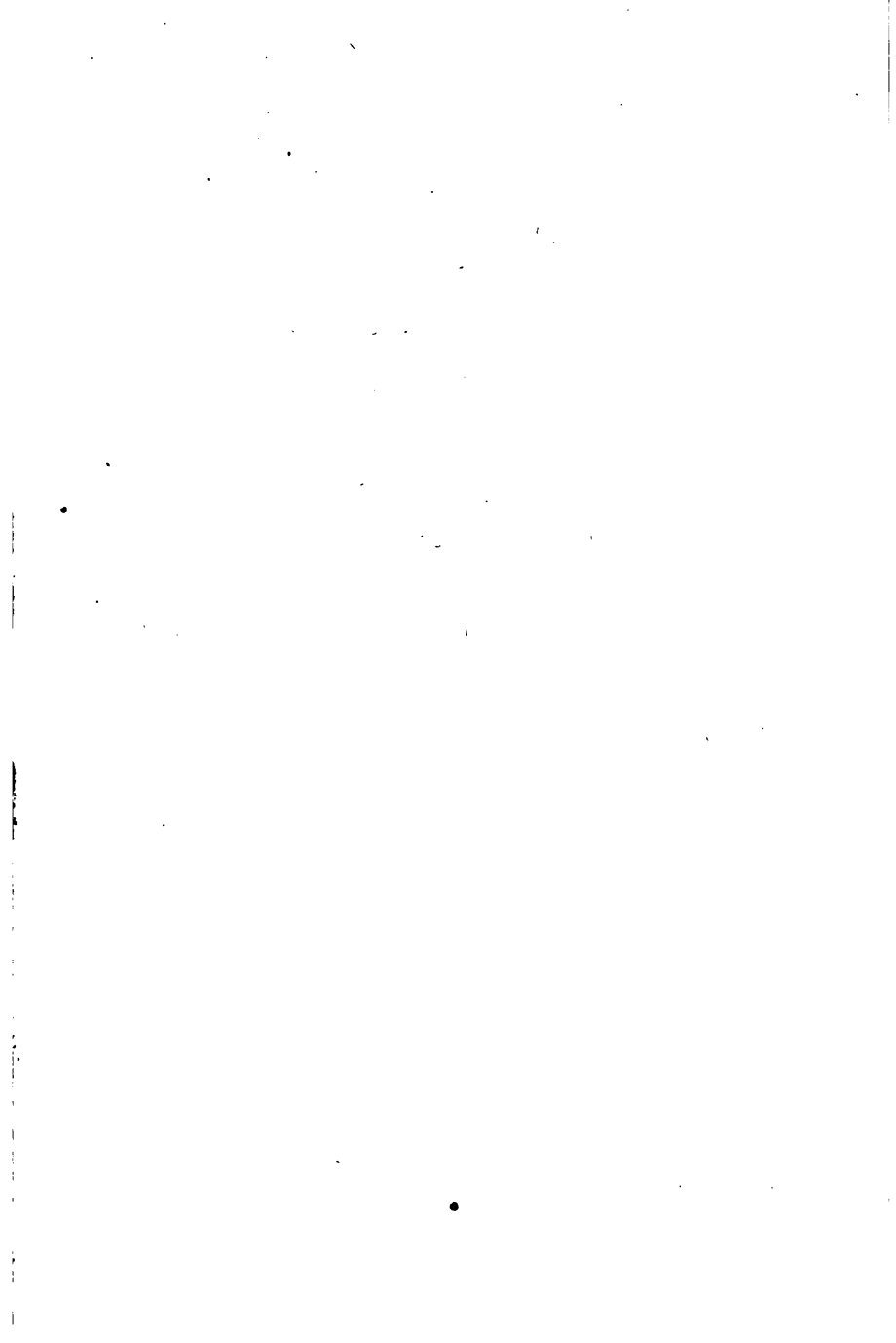
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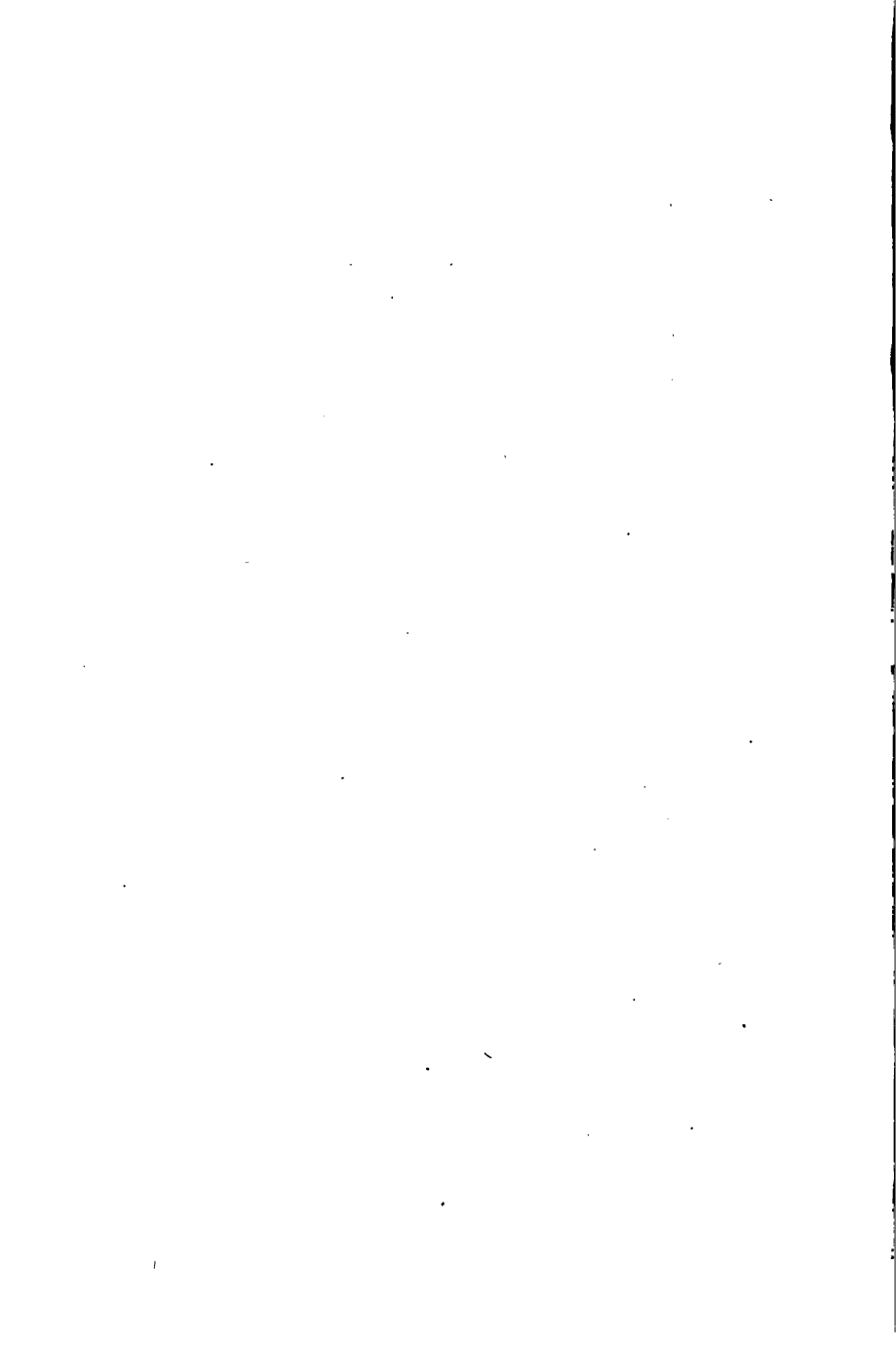
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